The New Criterion

September 1989

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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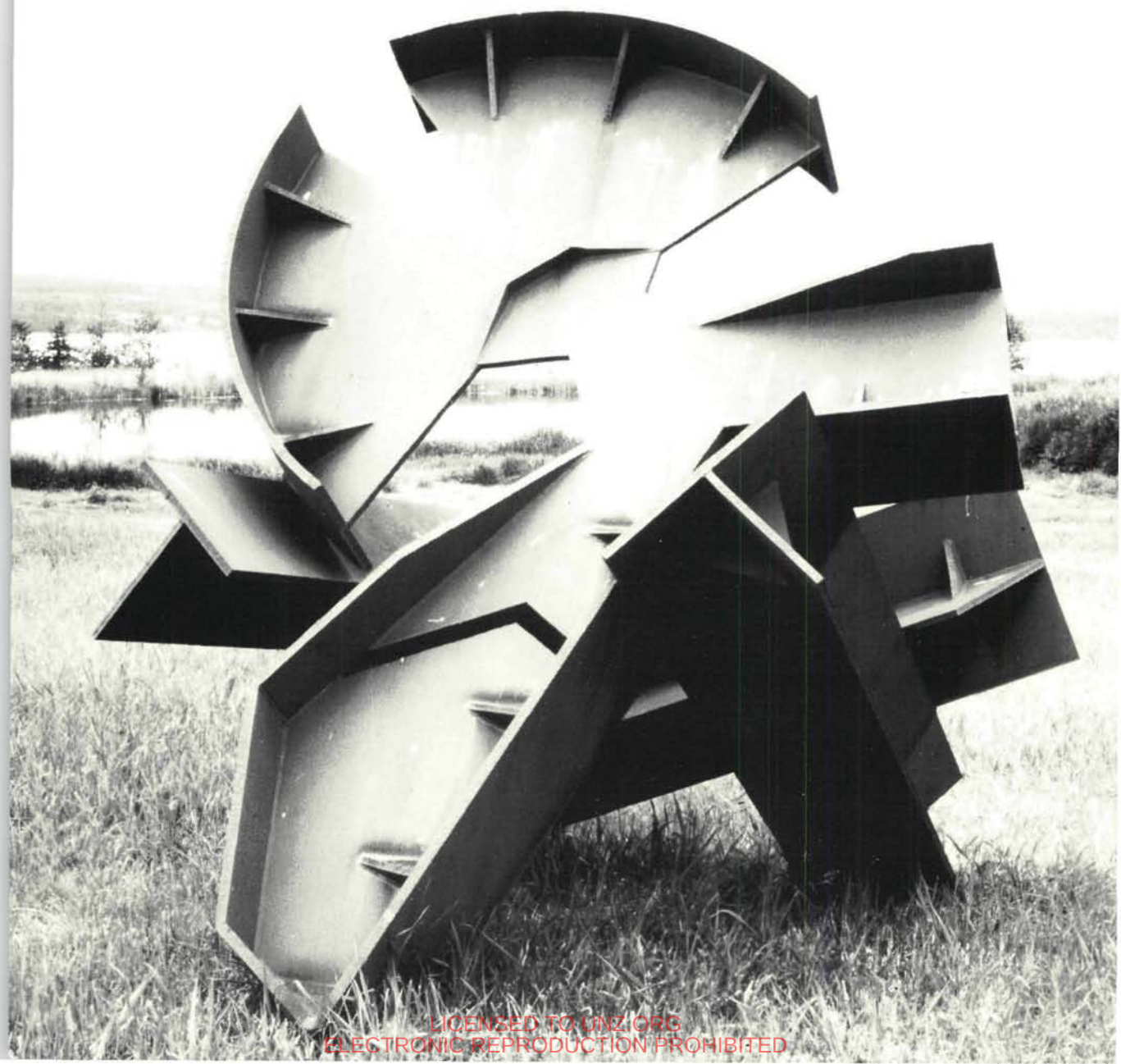

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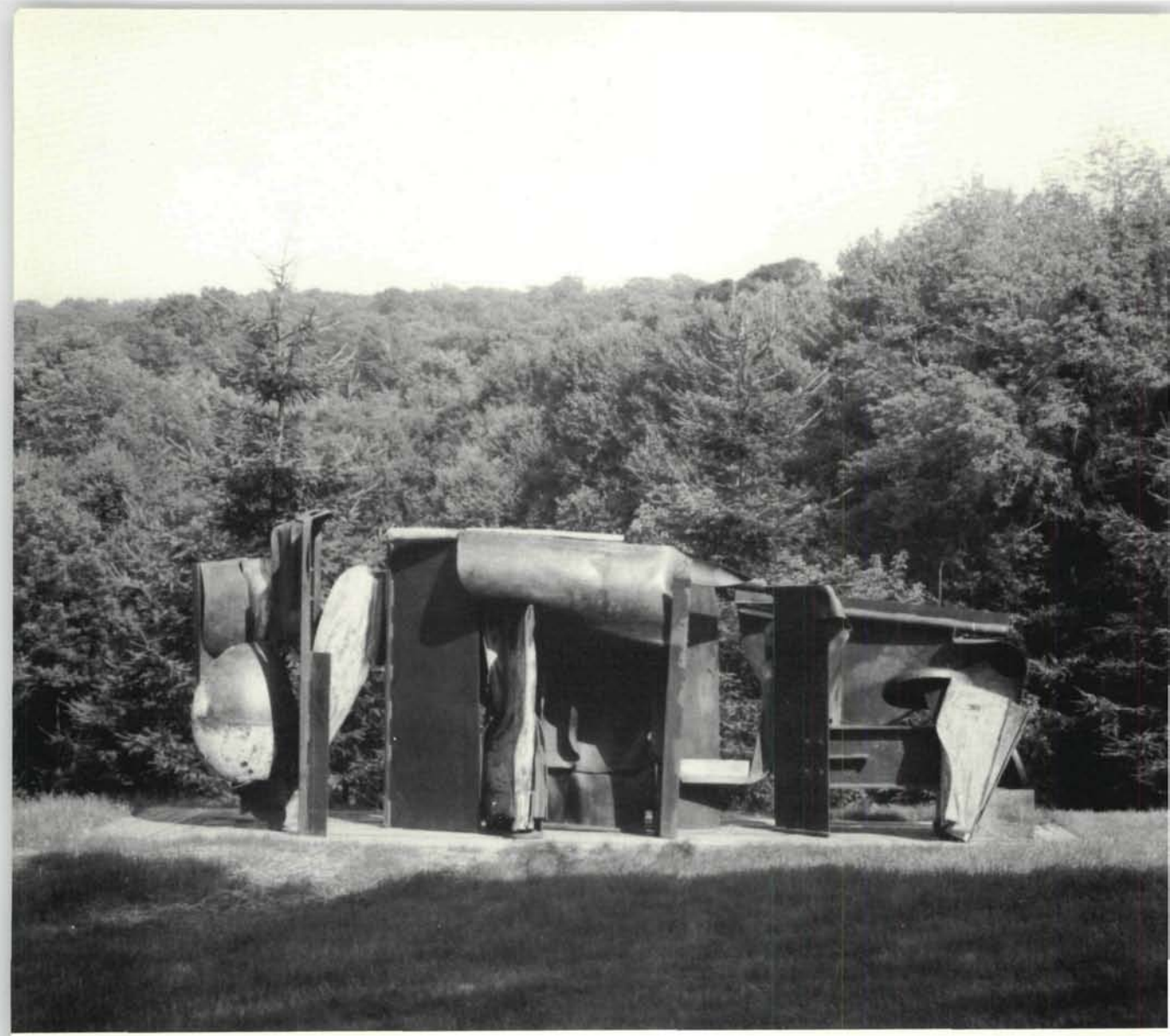

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Barbara Jordan's new book of poems, *Channel,* will be published next year by Beacon Press.

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Dana Mack wrote about Wilhelm Furtwängler for our November 1988 issue.

Jed Perl's book, *Paris Without End,* has been published by North Point Press.

Christopher Ricks's article in this issue is prefaced by a note about the author.

C. H. Sisson's most recent book of poetry is *God Bless Karl Marx* (Carcanet, 1987).

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Karen Wilkin wrote on German art at the Guggenheim for the June issue of *The New Criterion.*

Robley Wilson, Jr.'s story collection, *Terrible Kisses,* has just been published by Simon & Schuster.

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Notes & Comments: September 1989

Editor's note: With this issue, The New Criterion inaugurates a section devoted to Notes & Comments on timely issues and recent events likely to be of interest to our readers—H.K.

The NEA after Mapplethorpe

The Mapplethorpe mess, now enjoying rather more than Andy Warhol's proverbial fifteen minutes of fame, bids fair to become part of the dubious history of the artist's confrontation with bourgeois society. As the uproar over the Helms amendment attests, the impact of this governmentally supported provocation on the climate for public support of the arts in this country will not soon go away.

Because the National Endowment for the Arts directly funded the showing of Mapplethorpe's sado-masochist photographs, there has been a huge, and justified, outcry in Congress and across the nation about the use of federal subsidies for what is so plainly in the case of these photographs offensive art. There have been, and will doubtless continue to be, legislative attempts to prohibit such support in the future. In our opinion, such efforts, among them the Helms amendment, are doomed—unless they reflect the results of a serious re-thinking of the proper purposes of federal support for culture, and the proper mission of the NEA.

Direct public expenditures for culture were born in the 1960s out of a curious amalgam of Great Society uplift, guilt over the John Kennedy assassination, and an upper-class desire to transform *noblesse oblige* into *gouvernement oblige*. Amidst all the hoopla and self-congratulation surrounding the NEA, there has never been any real consideration of what art might be supported, and what the cultural interest of the state, as surrogate for the society, might be.

Instead, the operative philosophy underlying direct public patronage has been: "Art is good, more art is better, the most art is the best." The result of this arts boosterism has been an intellectual vacuum, which has been filled by powerful and noisy constituencies demanding and receiving federal support for art as mass entertainment, for art as social and political redress, and for art as an extension of the boundaries of cultural consciousness and individual life-styles. One need only look at public television and the vulgarization of museum exhibition programs and symphony orchestra schedules to see the triumph of art as entertainment; the proliferation of special-interest arts groups organized by gender and ethnicity is evidence enough of art as redress; the Mapplethorpe exhibition at such a distinguished national institution as the Whitney Museum in New York—even leaving aside for the moment the exhibition that was

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scheduled to appear at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington—is proof of the use of art to advocate hitherto unacceptable modes of personal behavior.

And so the NEA is now on trial. In its hour of need, the agency's advocates can call upon no arguments for its continuation other than the old and tired sentimentalities about how the arts embellish our existence and provide otherwise unavailable amenities to daily life—and lots of commercial and economic benefits in the bargain.

These arguments, it cannot be repeated often enough, will no longer do. Their lack of specificity and purpose, their failure to understand the nature of art and the long-term needs of culture in a political democracy, doom them to failure in convincing the American people (and their leaders) of the value of the NEA or in defending public decency against antinomian assaults. After much delay—a delay itself signifying drift and confusion at the highest levels of government—a new chairman of the NEA has been nominated. Unfortunately, leadership is impossible without policy: an appointment, no matter how qualified, can hardly substitute for a policy.

But policy is impossible without the making of choices and the giving of reasons. What is required is nothing less than the proclamation of a viable goal for public support and for the NEA (and for the National Endowment for the Humanities as well, though the condition of the NEH, because of recent strong and thoughtful leaders, is less critical).

Stated negatively, public cultural support cannot be about the provision of entertainment, either upscale or for the masses; it cannot be about the accomplishment of immediate and partisan social and political goals; it cannot be about the stretching of the limits of permissible personal behavior; it cannot validate the so-called "cutting edge" of art or thought.

Stated positively, public support must concentrate on nothing less than the transmission of the civilization of the past, via the present, to the future. Public support thus must concern itself with civilizing works of art, literature, and thought, their preservation, study, communication, and regeneration. While new work does have a place in public support, that place can hardly be central if the protection of civilization, the major purpose of such support, is to be accomplished. Above all, the sole criterion for public support must be that of the continuity and permanence of the highest achievements and values of human society.

The Library of America betrayed

When the Library of America was founded, with much fanfare, in 1979, its avowed purpose was to bring us "the collected works of America's foremost authors in uniform hardcover editions," and this is what it began doing in 1982 when the first four volumes were published. As the word *collected* indicated, this was not to be yet another commercial assault on the classroom-text market that concentrates on a relatively short list of classics already abundantly available in competing editions. Something at once grander, more serious, more permanent, and more disinterested was promised—an American equivalent, it was said, of the classic Pléiade editions of French literature. For the first time ever, American literature was to be rescued from the hit-or-miss vagaries of cultural fashion and commercial exploitation, and we were at last to have a permanent and comprehensive library of the writers who have shaped the course of our literary history.

The public-interest aspect of the Library of America project is emphatically spelled out in the paragraph that adorns the dust jacket of every volume so far published:

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> All of Melville, all of Hawthorne, all of James, and Emerson and Thoreau—these and the writings of other notable American novelists, historians, poets, philosophers, and essayists are, for the first time in our history, being published in a series of handsome and durable volumes. Each compact, elegant book includes several unabridged works, and some volumes run to as many as 1500 pages. Publication of the series is supported by grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Thanks to their generosity, America, like other nations, can offer every reader the collected works of its major authors in authoritative editions. The commitment to publish an authoritative version of an author's work assures the reader that only after thorough research and study is a text selected for the series. For each volume, a distinguished scholar has prepared a succinct chronology of the author's life and career, an essay on the choice of texts, and some necessary notes.

Was it expecting too much to think that this noble enterprise, one of the best things of its kind ever to enjoy a government subsidy, would remain insulated from the rampant vulgarity and cynicism that now presides over the commercial book-publishing industry in this country? Apparently it was. And so we can now look forward to a new, cut-rate, eviscerated, and thoroughly commercialized version of the Library of America—or something still claiming the name, anyway—in the paperback series that Vintage Books, a division of Random House, will commence marketing this fall.

Although the Vintage version still calls itself the Library of America, its books will bear little, if any, resemblance to the scholarly hardcover volumes this series was created—and subsidized—to give us. Gone is the very concept of an author's *collected* writings. What we are offered as a substitute for "all of Melville," for example, is yet another paperback edition of *Moby Dick*. And as bait to attract the unwary to this unworthy enterprise, Vintage has rounded up a gaggle of best-selling writers, mostly from the Random House/Knopf lists, to provide trendy introductions to its counterfeit version of the Library of America.

Thus we are to have Toni Morrison introducing *Moby Dick*, Peter Matthiessen introducing Thoreau's *Cape Cod*, E. L. Doctorow introducing Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, Robert Hughes on Francis Parkman, Garry Wills on Thomas Jefferson, etc. As the crowning touch in this shameless transformation of the nonprofit Library of America into still another Random House marketing operation, we are to have that eminent literary critic, Brooke Astor, introducing Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. One can easily imagine what Edith Wharton, with her high literary standards and her low opinion of upper-class New York society, would have had to say about that!

This whole operation is a complete betrayal of the Library of America idea, and not the least cynical aspect of its shoddy misrepresentations is the use it is making of the late Edmund Wilson's endorsement of the original series. When Wilson said that "it is absurd that our most read and studied writers should not be available in their entirety in any convenient form," he was not talking about this travesty, and it is the height of dishonesty to pretend that he was.

Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989)

The deaths of great performing musicians are always fateful. These personalities do not shape music, but they do shape the way it is perceived. Their passing in every case leaves both a void and an opportunity for good or for ill. Nowhere is this more true than with Herbert von Karajan. Equally at home in the opera house and the concert hall, he was the greatest conductor to emerge on the international scene after World War II. A master of orchestral ensemble and tone, he

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made Berlin the finest orchestra, and Salzburg the most prestigious festival, in the world. He was always interested in new talent, exerting the effort and taking the time to coach young artists, and then watching over their careers to make sure they were properly launched. He was not just passionately interested in making recordings; he was passionately interested in every aspect of the always evolving technologies by which performances are reproduced.

Karajan was also passionately interested in commerce. Given his remarkable musical abilities and a platform charisma unmatched since Toscanini, these commercial instincts enabled him to become the first power in classical music the world over. With his secure base in Berlin, his control of the Salzburg Festival, and his position as *primus inter pares* in the Deutsche Grammophon recording empire, he was able to do more than get what he wanted for himself musically and economically; he was able to get what he wanted for others, and to enable a favored few, using his name and position, to advance their own interests. Karajan was thus more than a great conductor; he was the linchpin of the entire classical music business.

The recordings Karajan made will continue to sell, and the artists he inspirited will continue to perform before the public. But the master personality, and even more the mastermind, is now gone. The Berlin Philharmonic is leaderless, as is the Salzburg Festival. Many names will be bandied about as Karajan's successor, but it is apparent now, and has been so for many years, that no conductors of anything like his status exist today. Furthermore, there are other vacancies in the orchestral world, vacancies not quite so important but nonetheless significant: the most important of these are in New York and Los Angeles, where neither Zubin Mehta nor André Previn is leaving anything like a success behind him.

As this game of musical chairs is played out, only one thing is certain: conductorial choices these days are made not because of the musical values of inspiration and seriousness but because of a conductor's standing in the international glamour derby. A new Karajan, were one to exist, would be chosen not for musical reasons but for his presumed ability to bring recording contracts to his new orchestra and, above all, to sell records, as Karajan supremely did, by the millions. What music these records are to contain, and how that music is to be played, are matters of minimal importance to the new powers that determine performing destinies. It would be sad indeed if Herbert von Karajan's legacy were to be not his superb musicianship but his equally impressive commercial achievements.

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Cyril Connolly's "Horizon"

by Hilton Kramer

A few months hence we shall be observing the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of *Horizon*, the literary monthly which Cyril Connolly founded in London in the early months of the Second World War. We shall also be observing the fortieth anniversary of the magazine's demise. Calling itself "A Review of Literature & Art," *Horizon* was published for exactly a decade—and what a decade it was! The first issue went to press barely three months after Britain, still a world power but woefully ill-prepared to fight a major war, found itself locked in lonely combat against the Nazis, who were very shortly in control of most of Europe. The last issue, with its unforgettable dirge—". . . it is closing time in the gardens of the West," etc.—emerged from a weaker and even bleaker, now "socialist" England, which was so impoverished and dispirited that it looked more and more like a casualty of the war in which it had been victorious. Through the darkest days of the Blitz and the V-1 ("doodle bug") bombings, with British losses steadily mounting abroad and what remained of cultural life—the life of the mind—under attack at home from the philistine press as frivolous and escapist, Connolly went right on producing, month after month, an unabashedly highbrow literary journal of extraordinary quality and vivacity. It was an amazing feat, and all the more amazing because Connolly had already pronounced himself a failure—"a lazy, irresolute person, overvain and over-modest, unsure in my judgments and unable to finish what I have begun." But then, as David Pryce-Jones has written, "the depiction of himself as some sort of royal failure was the foundation of [Connolly's] success." My own view is that *Horizon* was Connolly's greatest achievement—greater, certainly, than any of his own books. It was also one of the most remarkable intellectual achievements of its period, a triumph of spirit over circumstance.

Announcing in the first number that "The aim of *Horizon* is to give the writers a place to express themselves, and to readers the best writing we can obtain," Connolly also emphasized that "Our standards are aesthetic, and our politics are in abeyance." The first point, about aesthetic standards, was valiantly adhered to. The point about politics was more complicated. The very number in which the claim was made contained political articles by J. B. Priestley and Herbert Read—"vague political ramblings," as *Horizon*'s patron Peter Watson correctly observed—and others were expected to follow, as Connolly himself promptly acknowledged. Yet there is an important sense in which Connolly meant what he said about a suspension of what he called "our" politics. He was clearly referring to the kind of Marxism that had exerted so powerful an influence on his generation of British writers in the 1930s. In his "Comment" for *Horizon*'s inaugural issue he noted that "the impetus given by Left Wing politics is for

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the time exhausted." (For Connolly, the departure of Auden and Isherwood for America marked the end of the movement.) So, too, in Connolly's view, was the age of literary experiment drawing to a close. (He was right about that, too.) Thus, as he also wrote in *Horizon*'s first number, "however much we should like to have a paper that was revolutionary in opinions and original in technique," he did not believe that the customary amalgam of Marxism and modernism was any longer possible or appropriate to the task at hand. "At the moment," he wrote in one of those lapidary statements for which he was already celebrated, "civilization is on the operating table and we sit in the waiting room."

As Connolly conceived of it, *Horizon* was to be one of the instruments for securing the patient's survival. He supported the war—there was no mistaking his, or *Horizon*'s, position on that question—but he was adamant about keeping the journal's pages free of the canting propaganda that the war inevitably engendered. *Horizon* was to be a kind of literary sanctuary—"The Ivory Shelter," he called it—a demilitarized zone of the mind in which the creative and critical intelligence might prosper even at a time when so many lethal forces were arrayed against it. If an important part of *Horizon*'s task was to keep alive the memory of past artistic achievements (Mozart and Mallarmé, French classical drama and Henry James), and thus provide a sense of continuity and kinship with the very civilization that was now threatened with extinction, it was also the magazine's function to find and publish the writers who would carry on the work of that civilization into whatever future there might be. Connolly found them, too—most notably, his old school friend George Orwell, so opposed in so many ways to Connolly's own literary outlook but many of whose now famous essays on politics and popular culture nonetheless made their first appearance in *Horizon*'s pages during the war.

The editorial policy Connolly adopted for *Horizon* was avowedly eclectic, and he knew very well that this was bound to incur the wrath of both radicals and conservatives, who were alike in preferring a more homogenous "party" line. The first objective, as Connolly saw it, was to repair the damage that a decade of Marxist aesthetics had wrought: "it is our duty," he wrote in February 1940, "gradually to re-educate the peppery palates of our detractors to an appreciation of delicate poetry and fine prose."

> If literature is an art [he wrote in the same issue], then a literary magazine should encourage the artists, whether they are Left or Right, known or unknown, old or young, and *Horizon* therefore makes no more apology for Priestley's admirable essay, or Sir Hugh Walpole's revealing glimpse of Henry James, than it does for Orwell's analysis of Boy's papers or Auden's Elegy on Freud which will appear in the next number. Names mean nothing. *Horizon* is not to be judged by its names but by the quality of its contents and we hope eventually that the presence of the most detested best-seller or the most obscure young poet on the cover of *Horizon* will be enough to indicate that they have written something remarkably good. As to discovering a Joyce or an Eliot in one number, all we can do is bait the trap, to provide a medium where the future Rimbaud will find payment, good company and a sympathetic public. But it is possible that there are no Rimbauds, and that we must fall back on being the publishers of [Stephen Spender's] September Journal.

That last line was a characteristic example of Connolly's mordant candor, for Stephen Spender, although unnamed on the masthead, was at this time one of Connolly's closest collaborators on *Horizon*, and an excerpt from his "September Journal" was featured in the issue in which this not very flattering comparison was made.

The story of how Connolly accomplished what he did in *Horizon*, of the other people who made that accomplishment possible, and of Connolly's own life during the

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Horizon period, has now been told for the first time in a splendid new book—Michael Shelden's *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of "Horizon."*[1] Mr. Shelden, an American academic who was born in Oklahoma and now teaches at Indiana State University, is himself a first-rate writer, and the book he has given us in *Friends of Promise*—his first, by the way—is the kind of literary history, replete with vivid biographical portraits and shrewd critical judgments, that one had quite given up expecting from our professors of literature. One would like to think that Mr. Shelden represents a new turn in the vicissitudes of academic literary study—a *re*turn, that is, to a tradition that has been largely lost—but that is probably too much to hope for. Talent of this sort rarely represents anything but itself.

In any event, the account of Connolly in this book is the best I have read, its only serious rival being David Pryce-Jones's *Cyril Connolly: Journal and Memoir* (1984), an excellent book of much smaller compass. For its absorbing picture of literary life in wartime London, moreover, *Friends of Promise* is likewise exemplary, and not least because of the fine sense of proportion it exhibits in dealing with a subject which, given its large cast of characters and the drama of the war itself, could so easily have been distended into one of those inert, outsize chronicles that exhaust our patience and defeat their own purposes. Mr. Shelden is clearly a master researcher, and he has been obliged to ferret out a good deal of elusive detail both in the archives and from surviving witnesses. Yet the result is scholarship that has been completely assimilated into a shapely and unflagging narrative. One would be tempted to say that *Friends of Promise* reads at times like a good novel, if only there were still novels that gave us as many well-drawn characters as this book does.

Besides Connolly himself, these characters include his first wife, Jean Bakewell, a wealthy American girl from Baltimore whom Connolly met in Paris; Peter Watson, art collector, aesthete, and heir to a British margarine fortune, who put up all the money for *Horizon* and served as its art editor; three of Watson's homosexual lovers, Denham Fouts, Waldemar Hansen, and Norman Fowler, who were Americans; Stephen Spender, *Horizon*'s associate editor during its first year; Sonia Brownell, Connolly's young assistant who married *Horizon*'s most celebrated contributor, George Orwell, on his deathbed; and Lys Lubbock, Connolly's beautiful mistress and *Horizon*'s business manager, who eventually moved to New York and married an American. Among the minor characters in the narrative, playing walk-on roles, are such figures as Logan Pearsall Smith, Evelyn Waugh, Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Clement Greenberg, Lucian Freud, Arthur Koestler, Elizabeth Bowen, and, not least, Connolly's father, a retired army major, who enters the story as a somewhat farcical character but makes his exit as a very poignant figure.

Except for Peter Watson, whose portrait—the first candid account I have seen of this troubled but sympathetic figure—is one of the best things in the book, none of the other characters is given the attention that is lavished on Connolly, who dominates the story as ringmaster and presiding genius. Mr. Shelden is anything but a starry-eyed admirer of Connolly's every foible. While the gifts that made Connolly such an exceptional figure are fully acknowledged and brilliantly described in *Friends of Promise*, Mr. Shelden misses nothing of the restless, egotistical, spoiled-child aspect of the man—all those elements of Connolly's character that were so egregiously in evidence in his relations with women and, for that matter, with his other benefactors as well. Connolly spent much of his adult life living—and usually living well—off of other people's money. He envied the rich, and was in the habit of condescending to them—unless he could obtain something from them, in which case he was inclined to court them until the

1 *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of "Horizon,"* by Michael Shelden; Harper & Row, 304 pages, $24.95.

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prize had been won and then criticize them to their friends. At school he had learned to make himself amusing to his social superiors, and he turned that gift, too, into an instrument of advantage and preferment. He perfected a posture of charm, talent, mischief, and brilliance that proved to be very appealing, and then enclosed it in the pre-emptive claim to failure that absolved him from having to fulfill his talents.

It was only with *Horizon* that, for the first and last time, he delivered what he grandly promised. Otherwise, his well-rehearsed justification for his career as a shameless sponger was his much-vaunted ambition to write a literary masterpiece. In the earlier stages of this fantasy ambition, the great book was to be a novel. Then, in the *Horizon* period, though novels were from time to time worked on, the talk shifted to a study of Flaubert, one of Connolly's idols; and then, it was to be a book about France, which had early on claimed his loyalty as a model of civilization. None of these books was ever written, of course. He became an expert, however, at persuading people that he would write them, no doubt because in some part of his mind he believed it himself. Yet somehow there were always more engaging things to occupy his time and give him pleasure. He signed contracts and collected advances, and was remarkably adept at getting people to pay up. On this whole aspect of Connolly's literary career, the American publisher Cass Canfield made the definitive comment when he finally realized that Connolly was never going to write the books he had contracted for. "I give Connolly full credit," Mr. Canfield said, "for being one of the most charmingly devious literary gentlemen not actually behind bars."

Something similar might be said about his relations with women, who pampered him, often paid his bills, flattered his ego, served his pleasures, and otherwise went along with his every scheme, sometimes under threat of suicide and always under the spell of his charm and his need, only to find that the promises were usually broken in affairs of the heart, too, and there was always another candidate in the wings, if not already in bed, to supplant them. Mr. Shelden isn't given to moralizing but he is a keen judge of character, and his account of Connolly's, while for the most part sympathetic, is unblinking. He knows very well where the virtues of his protagonist are to be found, and is sharp about separating the glamour of Connolly's life from the sometimes unlovely reality. None of this, I hasten to add, has the effect of diminishing our interest in Connolly. On the contrary, the more we learn about him, the more he comes to resemble a character in a novel—the novel of his life, as it were, which he couldn't write but which he never tired of performing for all who knew him.

Yet it is finally because of his performance as the editor of *Horizon* that Connolly's claim on our attention remains more than that of an interesting character. *Enemies of Promise* (1938), though parts of it can still be read with interest, is now more likely to survive as a literary document of the 1930s than as a living classic. *The Unquiet Grave* (1944), though it has always had its admirers, among them, oddly enough, Ernest Hemingway, looks more and more like a period piece; and its famous opening line—"The more books we read, the clearer it becomes that the true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece and that no other task is of any importance"—looks, in retrospect, like the plea-bargaining of a guilty talent. As for the various collections of essays and parodies—*The Condemned Playground* (1945), *Ideas and Places* (1953), *Previous Convictions* (1963), and *The Evening Colonnade* (1963)—all of them contain some good things, especially *Ideas and Places*, which includes material from *Horizon*, but no one would describe them as great criticism. *Horizon* itself is Connolly's monument. Which is another reason why the focus of Mr. Shelden's book is exactly right.

Even with *Horizon*, however, a distinction must be made between the first half of the decade in which it was published—in other words, the war years—and the second. With exceptions to be noted, the magazine's real

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achievement lies in those first five years. The poetry—much of it written by W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas—was better, and so was most of the prose. And the attention to art, though no match for what *Horizon* was able to bring its readers after the war, was nonetheless more important because the life of art had suffered even more restrictions during the war than literature had. Moreover, the momentum sustained in those first five years had a fervor—a sense of mission—that was lost in the drab, spiritually constricted period which followed.

> During the war [Mr. Shelden writes] *Horizon*'s purpose had been clear. Every issue had been a reaffirmation of the importance of culture in wartime; and the enemies of culture had been easy to spot and to criticize. But in the post-war period those enemies were more difficult to define, the battle lines were more loosely drawn, and the purpose of the struggle was much less certain. *Horizon*'s historical moment had come and gone; never again would one small independent magazine assume such an important place in the cultural life of the nation, attracting so many important writers without cash, political interest or a new literary movement as bait. Watson and Connolly had seized the moment and made the most of it; the decline of their extraordinary partnership was unavoidable.

It was a measure of Connolly's sense of the historical moment that he so eagerly welcomed writers whose literary purposes were so different from his own.

> In December 1939 George Orwell told him that he had just finished a book called *Inside the Whale*, which contained three long essays. Connolly asked whether he could publish part of it in *Horizon*. At that point the book had no publisher, and Orwell was not sure that he would find one. He was also uncertain that the essays were suitable for *Horizon*. The shortest of the three, "Boys' Weeklies," was still rather long for magazine publication, and its subject hardly seemed appropriate for *Horizon*'s "highbrow" readership . . . . Serious essays on popular culture are common today, but "Boys' Weeklies" was the first important essay of its kind written in England. Much to his credit, Connolly had the foresight to accept it, even though it took up nearly a third of the magazine . . . . Over the next ten years many writers would benefit from this policy, but no one used it to better advantage than Orwell, who wrote half a dozen important essays for the magazine.

As Mr. Shelden correctly observes, "Connolly's decision to publish "Boys' Weeklies" demonstrated that *Horizon* was not going to be a simple caretaker for literature during wartime. It would take risks and do the unpredictable, without much regard for what was happening in the war."

Connolly did much the same thing for Arthur Koestler, who was in England as a refugee and just beginning his career as an English-language writer.

> When Koestler arrived in London, Connolly took it upon himself to provide him with a place to stay, and shortly afterwards helped him to become an established writer in London. In turn, Koestler gave *Horizon* three important articles: "The Yogi and the Commissar" in 1942, "The Birth of a Myth" in 1943, and "The Intelligentsia" in 1944. The second essay, which was about the death of Richard Hillary, was chosen by readers as the most popular work in the magazine for 1943 . . . . Koestler remained forever grateful for Connolly's support, saying many years later: "Cyril took me under his wing. I want to emphasize very warmly my indebtedness to Cyril. Instead of spending my time in loneliness and isolation like so many exiles, or confined to an emigré clique, I was welcomed into the *Horizon* crowd."

The postwar period was inevitably different. Connolly made an important discovery in Angus Wilson, who was then working at the British Museum and had written about a dozen short stories which had never been published. A friend showed a few of these

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to Connolly in 1947, and he promptly accepted two for *Horizon*. Years later Wilson wrote Connolly that "If I had not been chosen by you for publication in *Horizon* it is almost certain that my writing would have petered out as the unfertilized hobby of a man who was looking for some means of expression but never found it."

For the most part, however, Connolly looked abroad for new stimulation—first to his beloved Paris, of course, and then more and more to the United States. The many articles he published by or about Sartre, Camus, Gide, and other French writers cannot have for us today the kind of excitement they undoubtedly had for Connolly and his readers at the time—our whole relation to the postwar French literary scene has so drastically changed—but it was nonetheless a sign of his editorial acumen that Connolly immediately grasped what was new and important in Paris and gave it full play in the magazine. At times this enthusiastic interest in "abroad" led him astray—most conspicuously in a special number of *Horizon* devoted to Switzerland which today is all but unreadable. But even this misfired effort has to be understood as part of Connolly's attempt to re-establish a sense of cultural connection between a diminished Britain and whatever remnants of a shattered Europe showed some evidence of intellectual vitality.

If, about the many pages devoted to France in these postwar issues of *Horizon*, there is a sense of piety—of worshipping at a familiar shrine in the hope of recapturing a lost emotion, if not indeed a lost youth—there is about the attention paid to the United States a more vivid sense of genuine discovery. From the outset Connolly had taken an uncommon interest in American writing and painting, reprinting Clement Greenberg's classic essay on "Avant-garde and Kitsch" shortly after its initial appearance in *Partisan Review* and publishing an essay on "Painting in America," by John Rothenstein, as early as 1941. But it was in the postwar period that this interest flowered. The special double number devoted to "Art on the American Horizon" in October 1947 gave its readers a better account of American cultural life at that moment than any single thing published in the United States. It included, among much else, the first publication anywhere of an excerpt from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*; Clement Greenberg's important essay on "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture," in which Jackson Pollock was named as "the most powerful painter in contemporary America" and David Smith was described as "the only other American artist of our time who produces art capable of withstanding the test of international scrutiny"; a report on American architecture written by Philip Johnson and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.; an essay on American advertising by Marshall McLuhan; "The Higher Learning in America" by Jacques Barzun; "American Foreign Policy" by Joseph Alsop; fiction by John Berryman, poems by Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, E. E. Cummings, and W. H. Auden, and an account of Los Angeles from Christopher Isherwood.

One of the best things in that issue, moreover, was Connolly's own lengthy introduction, a chronicle and commentary based on his own visit to the U.S.

> At a time [Connolly wrote] when the American way, backed by American resources, has made the country into the greatest power the world has known, there has never been more doubting and questioning of the purpose of the American process; the higher up one goes the more searching becomes this self-criticism, the deeper the thirst for a valid mystique of humanity. Those who rule America, who formulate its foreign policy and form its opinion, are enormously conscious of their responsibility and of the total inadequacy of the crude material philosophy of life in which they grew up. The bloody-minded, the smug, the imperialist, the fascist, are in a minority. Seldom, in fact, has an unwilling world been forced to tolerate, through its own folly, a more unwilling master.

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Connolly was by no means an uncritical admirer of what he found in America, but as this passage attests, he never succumbed to the kind of vulgar and uninformed anti-Americanism that was already rampant in Britain and in Europe. And about the literary scene he was, not surprisingly, particularly sharp. In 1947, for example, he appears to have divined the fate of Truman Capote with an almost preternatural foresight.

> The hunt for young authors who, while maintaining a prestige value . . . may yet somehow win the coveted jack-pot, is feverish and incessant . . . . "Get Capote"—at this minute the words are resounding on many a sixtieth floor, and "get him" of course means make him and break him, smother him with laurels and then vent on him the obscure hatred which is inherent in the notion of another's superiority . . . . America is the one country (greatly to its credit) where an author can still make a fortune for life from one book, it is also the country where everyone is obsessed with the idea, where publishers live like stockbrokers, and where authors, like film-stars, are condemned to meditate from minute to minute last year's income tax, next week's publicity.

About many things, indeed, Connolly had a very clear understanding. For an American reader some forty years later, this issue on "Art on the American Horizon" marks the high point of *Horizon*'s postwar period, and it remains an invaluable guide to the onset of our own postwar era.

Early on in the war Connolly had foreseen the shape of things to come for both Britain and America.

> Whatever happens in the war [he wrote in his "Comment" for the February 1940 issue], America will be the gainer. It will gain enormously in wealth, and enormously (through the refugees) in culture. England will be poverty-stricken, even in victory, and will have either to be a poor reactionary state, a Victorian museum piece, like Hungary or Austria, or a poor progressive country, like Denmark or Scandinavia.

He was a remarkable man, despite his flaws and his failures, and *Horizon* was his most remarkable accomplishment. Michael Shelden is to be congratulated for having written a book that does him—and *Horizon*—justice in every respect.

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The Soviet dinosaur

by Gregory Freidin

Imagine the horror of a paleontologist confronted by a live dinosaur—grinning amicably and wagging its tail as a token of good intentions. In the era before the advent of glasnost and perestroika, people studying and writing about the Soviet Union practiced a paleontology of sorts. An odd bone thrown over the Iron Curtain or a chunk of petrified entrails surreptitiously pushed under it were analyzed meticulously and served as the basis for reconstructing the entire body of the beast. Now these same people find themselves inside a paleontologist's nightmare, for the Soviet Union has arrived at our door—thanks to glasnost, an increased access to decision-makers in Moscow, and a veritable invasion of Soviet visitors, among them scholars, policy advisers, intellectuals, generals, ministers, and, of course, the dissidents whom we must now rechristen, to avoid anachronism, members of the opposition. Could this still be the old country?

True, the Soviet Union retains much of what has defined it for decades; yet the organs and various parts of this Hobbesian animal have turned out to be distributed differently from what was once imagined, and the whole thing does not appear as well put together as the old paleontological renditions seemed to suggest. Indeed, this commonwealth—uniting as it does a Northern European Estonia ripe for democracy and autonomy and an Oriental Uzbekistan choking on the Soviet imperial legacy—so much resembles a fanciful animal from a medieval bestiary that another question arises: are we dealing here with one beast or a multitude of them?

Eager to see it for myself, I went to the Soviet Union last fall for two months, an American intellectual with a professional interest in the country (I study Russian literature) and also one with a personal connection to it (I grew up in Moscow). This was the first time in seventeen years that I had visited the Soviet Union. Because of my research, having to do with Stalin and writers, and for family reasons, my horizons did not extend beyond Moscow, its professional middle class and intellectuals. Part of a small minority in a country of two hundred and eighty million, and traditionally very distant from power, these people have been drawn by Gorbachev into the political process and have come to play the role of the proverbial dog's tail, wagging the world's largest territorial giant out of its coma-like slumber. My frequent palavers with cab drivers, mostly of the "gypsy" variety (that is, just about anyone who drives an automobile), added some diversity to the otherwise highbrow fare served up by my Moscow contacts. The outer horizons of what I know about the Soviet Union are defined by the Soviet and émigré press, which I have been following assiduously since the beginning of perestroika. What follows, then, are a few informal impressions of my contact with the Soviet Union today. They are intentionally

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open-ended and blurred. After all, the entire country is on the move, radically reshaping itself even as I am putting my pen to paper.

To an old Russian hand like myself, the Soviet Union still looks familiar. The problem is that the parts no longer add up. The ease with which they used to add up to something coherent—with every protagonist and event occupying its appointed niche in the rigid Stalinist structure—had made the Soviet Union eminently calculable and describable. But that country exists no longer. Oh yes, it is still on the map, still equipped with ICBMs and all the other accoutrements of a superpower; it is still largely undemocratic and still intact as a de facto empire—that is, it is not yet facing a large-scale open revolt from a constituent republic. Perhaps most important, it is still run out of Communist Party headquarters and its analogues in the all-pervasive apparat. The truth of this was pointed out by speaker after speaker at the June 1989 Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow. Even so, every intelligent observer, including at long last the country's top leadership, understands that the center no longer holds—whether one is referring to the nationalities, the economy, or the sciences, to education, health care, social organization, or, finally, to the Soviet Communist ideology itself. Indeed, the country now stands at the edge of a precipice and unless some drastic measures are taken in a matter of months—this note of urgency, made ominous by the recent miners' strike, has been a leitmotif in the Soviet Press for at least a year—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics runs the risk of a mind-boggling internal convulsion.

None of this happened overnight. Gradually, one by one, the consistently incompetent Soviet government has run out the special dispensations that, until now, have been conveniently extended to it by nature, history, and chance. The realm of science and technology is a prime example. For a while the general technological backwardness of the Soviet Union was not felt too acutely because a certain level of development—in the space program and in ICBM production, for instance—could be insulated from the rest of the economy and still secure for the country a superpower status. But in the age of hi-tech such local achievements can no longer serve as convincing emblems of advancement. Failures are all too obvious. The Soviet Union is behind Mauritius in the area of infant mortality and stands unchallenged in the prevalence of alcoholism; its own officials acknowledge that twenty-five thousand people die each year from drinking improperly treated tap water. Even the country's vast mineral deposits, a seemingly inexhaustible blessing, have been plundered with the predatory energy of a colonial power, as Gorbachev recently admitted. The Soviet Union has become an empire that has turned its imperial appetite upon itself. How else can one interpret the fact that it produces five times the number of tractors per capita than are produced in the United States but only half as much grain?

Even more important to Soviet life until now have been the special dispensations in the spiritual sphere that were once accorded to the government by Soviet history: for example, the people's acceptance, however grudging, of the political status quo and of the legitimacy of the party-state. In part, such acceptance stemmed from an almost instinctive fear bred by the Stalinist terror; in part, from perceived gains in the social, cultural, and economic sphere; in part, from the people's willingness to tolerate privation for the sake of national defense—an obsession enforced by the state and reinforced by memories of the war with Germany. What cemented these elements together, and in addition provided for continuity in political discourse, was the Soviet Communist ideology: its simple-minded commitment to the logic of history (which would supposedly culminate in a paradise on earth), its monopoly on representing that logic, and the feeling of superiority that the Communist ideology conferred on its adherents.

Until the late 1970s, many people

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accepted on faith at least some version of the official story of the creation of the party-state. This story, or master plot, supplied meaning for everything that followed, protecting the original objectifying event—the October Revolution—from many a tarnishing misfortune. "If it hadn't been for the war, we could have been as well off as the Germans," so went the customary refrain. In a similar way, there has been an attempt to absorb the crisis of the present into the mythology of the past. "Just as we have won the civil war and World War II against impossible odds," the argument would run, "so we shall be able to overcome our present difficulties."

All of these special dispensations, material as well as ideological, might have provided the state with the opportunity to accomplish reform while minimizing social and economic distress, but they were used only to buy time, to postpone the day of reckoning. And that day is today, indeed it is yesterday. The traditional ideology has been rendered obsolete and dysfunctional by changing demographics (as fewer people remember the Terror or World War II), the expanding horizons of the population and its increased ability to articulate its views, and the revolution in mass communication. There are very few people left today who find the old official story—or, for that matter, *any* story issuing from the state—a believable one. At the Congress of People's Deputies in June, one listened in vain for any signs of Communist revivalism in the speeches of even the most conservative deputies. Suspended for what must have seemed an eternity, disbelief is back, fast evolving into impatience and outrage. At the Congress, Yuri Vlasov's tactfully worded call for the Communist Party to resign from power elicited applause. I can only imagine the glee with which Vlasov's words were greeted by the millions of viewers glued to their radios and televisions. (It has been estimated that labor productivity during the televised sessions fell by as much as twenty percent.)

Perhaps the most powerful example of the dissolution of the Soviet Communist ideology is to be seen in the debates surrounding the history of the collectivization of agriculture. This pillar of the Stalinist state is now variously qualified as the "unpeasanting" of the Soviet Union, the acme of totalitarian repression, mass murder, even genocide. There may not be general agreement on the causes of this national catastrophe—explanations range from peasant ignorance to a Jewish conspiracy—but the old master plot is decidedly dead. One no longer hears that collectivization was a necessary sacrifice in the face of the impending war with Germany. Rather, the war was won not because of but in spite of collectivization, or it was nearly lost because of it and because of Stalin's other catastrophic blunders—so goes the dominant line today.

Now that they are no longer framed by the archetypal narrative of Soviet Marxism, the country's past and present do not fall into an orderly arrangement of prefiguration and fulfillment; instead, they are allowed to accumulate in random and unruly piles. Indeed, what logic of history can account for the mass extermination of the peasantry and the virtual enslavement of the survivors? Or who would dare to explain away the murderous orgy of the late 1930s now that even the Marxist Roy Medvedev, a historian with impeccable dissident credentials, declares in print and without equivocation that by 1937 the "new orders from Moscow quickly transformed the 'correctional labor' camps into camps designed for extermination"? What did that prefigure or fulfill?

Demystified, the Soviet Communist ideology has lost its axiomatic transparency and become simply a botched story, a jumble of good intentions, murderous inhumanity, and lies. "We are sorry." One can almost hear this unspoken refrain in the media dominated by Gorbachev's generation. "We are sorry, comrades, but there has been a terrible mistake."

Curiously, the people who had been most radically critical of the Soviet phenomenon, to the point of rejecting it

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altogether, find themselves as disoriented by recent events as the hitherto loyal Soviet man. Gone are the days when the unwieldy Brezhnevite state could guarantee its opponents the role of David taking on Goliath. Under Gorbachev, the slings of criticism have become so widely available, and the target so easy, that one would have to try very hard to miss the mark. It would seem, then, that the other master plot—the one involving a giant monster being challenged by a courageous man—has also become obsolete, no longer capable of sustaining an intellectual's social identity. For it is one thing to defend the unqualified Good and purposefully fight the Evil Monster, or simply to withdraw from any contact with the state, as many intellectuals had done; it is quite another to realize that what appeared as Evil incarnate may have just been a product of delirious indiscretion, an accident, an unintended mutation, a mistake if you wish, however colossal and catastrophic its consequences.

What has replaced the old ideological totality are some scattered institutionalized religions and exotic cults, consumerism, a rich assortment of nationalisms, and, perhaps most oddly, the lusty, hedonistic vision of the urban youth culture, with its strong opinions, aerobic narcissism, and orgiastic rock 'n' roll. Moscow's morning television news show, which lasts two hours and focuses on affairs of state, is liberally interlarded with rock videos ranging from Madonna's *Material Girl* to Grebenshchikov's *Give Us Back Our Land*, which flashes a low shot of peasant women crossing themselves before a wooden church to the throb of an invisible electric guitar. Cut to the Kuban region, with a scorching sun and phalanxes of combine harvesters—things are not so good there. Cut to a dozen leggy women in leotards tempting Soviet citizens to join them in aerobic euphoria—now, that *is* good. Who knows, perhaps some of their sex appeal will rub off on the affairs of state, lending a bit of excitement to the Sisyphean job of holding together a disintegrating country.

Pop sex aside, nationalism is the most readily available and flexible substitute for a rational ideology like Marxism, and it has long played a significant role in the Soviet Communist *mentalité*. But if for most major ethnic groups nationalism instantly fills the ideological vacuum, in Russia proper the question of national identity is one of loss, not gain, and poses a particularly vexing problem. For one thing, being Russian has never meant the same as being, say, Georgian or Polish, because the Russians view themselves and function as a sort of Olympian people, at once particular and invisible with regard to other national groups. It is a give-away that there exists neither a Communist Party nor a KGB of the Russian Republic, whereas all the other constituent republics have both a Party and a KGB of their own. This supremacist aspect of the Russian self-image belongs to the imperial legacy, and exchanging it for something smaller and local will be both painful and confusing. Curiously, the view that being Russian may simply refer to a geographical, linguistic, and broadly cultural identification, rather than to one's biological roots, finds few advocates even in the most liberal milieu. Indeed, it took a Latvian writer, Jan Peters, to point out to his Russian counterparts at the June Congress (with considerable sarcasm) that the peoples of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—"in whose veins there courses Russian, Bielorussian, Jewish, Polish, Swedish, Finnish blood"—do not define their national identity on the basis of biology.

In Gorbachev's Moscow, one hears endless complaints that the Russians, unlike other national groups, have no place of their own and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to be Russian (the impersonal construction is so telling!) while safeguarding this right for others. But what the politics of Russian nationalism will look like after nationalist feelings coalesce into specific ideological positions and become part of a new institutional structure remains to be seen. For a while, the neo-Nazi group Pamiat, with its unabashedly fascist message,

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including its "news" of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, attracted considerable attention and some sympathy. But as a political organization whose platform consists of hate alone Pamiat has been losing popular support and now faces a dim political future. Still, even if its lunatic slogans have only a limited effect in highly concentrated doses, once they are dispersed and attached to some reasonable issues, such as the environment, they begin to acquire a respectability and potency that are good reason for concern and caution. A case in point is Victor Belov, a talented author who publishes in and serves on the editorial board of the liberal *Novy Mir* and who has recently been elected Chairman of the Writers' Union of the Russian Republic. When he spoke at the Congress of People's Deputies, he spent much of his time castigating the state for funding one ecological catastrophe after another, only to close his speech by linking the country's crisis to the liberals' alleged facility with Xerox machines and then connecting both to sundry dark and mysterious forces—an obvious allusion to Pamiat's canard about a Judeo-Masonic plan for conquering the world. In all fairness, most of the press treats such conspiracy theories with a healthy disgust and ridicule and, at least in Moscow, candidates with links to Pamiat were soundly defeated in recent elections. But the nationalists of Belov's ilk have made important strides. They have organized their own political association in Leningrad and are lending intellectual respectability to some of the most outré ideas by publishing them in such bastions of scholarly decorum as Moscow's *Problems of Literature*. There is no doubt that the Russian Orthodox Church, both its hierarchy and laity, will play a decisive role in the formation of a new national identity in Russia proper. But it has still to play its hand in this game. What the outcome of the process will be is anybody's guess.

An incident I witnessed on the Arbat mall, a civilized street of old Moscow that is closed to traffic, has become emblematic for me of the complexity and fluidity of the Soviet Union today. A policeman was trying to arrest a Hare Krishna for proselytizing in a public place. Immediately, the cop and his quarry—both undistinguished-looking young men—were surrounded by a crowd of people, a random crowd, who angrily but correctly challenged the policeman's right to arrest the Russian follower of a distant Indian deity. Unexpectedly for me, the policeman felt obliged to enter into a legal argument with his challengers. "The Constitution," he began, rattling off the well-known formula in a high-pitched Moscow voice, "guarantees Soviet citizens the freedom from religious propaganda." "But the guy wasn't forcing anybody to listen to him," someone promptly responded. The tug-of-war went on for a while without, it seemed, any hope of resolution, until a young woman, with a finely chiseled face of great intensity, looked the policeman straight in the eye and said: "You are taking this guy in because you still have the power but we all know that you won't have it for much longer and soon you'll have to answer for it all." She spoke firmly, with a well-controlled, focused anger and a matter-of-fact authority—a person articulating a shared belief without any fear of reprisal. In a minute or two the Hare Krishna was let go, and the crowd dispersed.

For this observer, who might well have been an involved participant, the incident was reminiscent of his own close brushes with the rough hide of the Soviet leviathan in the middle and late 1960s. But what a faltering, disoriented creature it has become—possessing little authority, unsure of its might, awesome only in the crushing magnitude of its aging and ungainly body!

"A state," Nietzsche wrote somewhere, "has no aim; we alone give it this aim or that." Any ideas, comrades, citizens, gentlemen, ladies?

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"Baseless dreaming": the novels of Graham Greene

by Bruce Bawer

In the firmament of contemporary international letters, there are a few select names which seem to trail clouds of glory everywhere they go. For literate folk around the world—even for literate folk who have never read a word of their writings—the names of such authors as Calvino and Borges have much the same iconic quality that names like Garbo and Gable continue to have for old-movie enthusiasts. As in the case of Hollywood stardom, furthermore, the extraordinary fame of these writers often has as much to do with non-aesthetic factors—among them personality, politics, public relations, and sheer serendipity—as with the actual breadth of their talents and the artistic value of their achievements.

In the English-speaking world, there is no one who belongs to this exclusive circle of authors more surely than Graham Greene; and that he, of all the English-language writers in his generation, should have achieved such eminence can only be described as remarkable. Now in his mid-eighties, Greene first attained a degree of celebrity, more than half a century ago, as an author of best-selling thrillers; if he was respected at all, it was not for his artistry but for his productivity, his ability to concoct entertaining light narratives, and his impressive sales figures. The story of how this young author of thrillers developed an international reputation as one of the great writers of his time cannot help being a most instructive one—instructive, that is, in what it can tell us about the twentieth-century art of literary-career management, and (by extension) in what it can tell us about the peculiar values of Western literary culture in our time. As it happens, this is an especially appropriate time for a thoughtful consideration of Greene's literary career, for the Viking Press has recently published the capacious first volume of an authorized two-part biography of Greene, which takes him from his birth in 1904 to the outbreak of World War II; the book is by Norman Sherry, the writer of several studies of Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, and the Brontës.[1]

Sherry is, indeed, such a splendid example of the sort of commentator who has helped to raise Greene's reputation to its present heights that it would be useful, I think, to examine his biography in some detail before proceeding to a discussion of Greene's career. Not that the casual bookstore browser need scrutinize this volume for long before deciding whether to buy it: on the contrary, he'll get a pretty good idea of what's coming from the very first paragraph. For the biography's main text begins with a highly unpromising agglomeration of detail about—what else?—the day of Greene's birth in 1904. "The second of October," Sherry informs us, "was a Sunday; the weather, after a cold and cloudy September, was fair; and according to his mother's entry

1 Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene*. Volume I: 1904-1939. Viking, 783 pages, $29.95.

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in a sixpenny booklet entitled 'All About Baby' (produced by Steedman's of Walworth, Surrey, who manufactured soothing powders for children cutting their teeth, and illustrated with line drawings of some plump and rather sinister-looking young children), the boy was born at 10:20 a.m. and weighed 7½ pounds." Seven and a half pounds—got that? And so it goes: in the next few pages, Sherry provides for posterity the dates on which Greene wore his first short clothes, cut his first tooth, and so forth; the reader who looks forward to seven-hundred-odd pages of this sort of niggling detail will, alas, not be disappointed.

How was Sherry, of all people, recruited for this momentous project? In a chatty preface, he informs us proudly that he was chosen by Greene himself—and chosen not by reason of his superior wisdom or insight or style but rather because Greene admired the way he'd researched his books on Conrad (one of Greene's favorite authors): instead of poring through criticism and such, he'd "vacated the library" and reverently retraced Conrad's footsteps, exploring the places around the world that the author of *Heart of Darkness* had known and used as settings for his fiction. In researching the Greene biography, Sherry followed much the same procedure, journeying to remote villages in Mexico and West Africa which had found their way into such novels as *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Power and the Glory*, and interviewing some of the people on whom Greene had modeled his characters. It is not necessarily a bad idea, to be sure, for a biographer to devote much of his time to this sort of travelling; but in the course of reading Sherry's book one finds oneself wishing that for every week he spent on arduous expeditions to Third World backwaters he had devoted an hour or so in an easy chair to concentrated reflection about the verities that were right under his nose.

What, one wonders, really lies behind Greene's choice of this man as his Ellmann, his Edel? Possibly there was an element of identification: Sherry's *modus operandi*, after all, strongly resembles Greene's own longtime practice of sojourning for weeks on end in exotic and dangerous places in order to soak up atmosphere for his novels. Or could it be that the solitary and secretive Greene, in selecting the peripatetic Sherry as his official biographer, deliberately chose someone whom he knew would spend more time accumulating innocuous facts than investigating bothersome truths, someone who would be more interested in pointing out trivial inconsistencies of date and place in his interviewees' half-century-old recollections than in pondering the deep moral and intellectual contradictions which are part of the very fabric of Greene's life and art? Any reader who is aware of Greene's penchant for practical jokes may be excused for concluding that his selection of the vapid, literal-minded Sherry as his biographer may well have been something of a joke on all of us.

In the event, if Greene wanted to be the subject of a dull, undiscerning hagiography, he could hardly have done better than Sherry. His book is a treasure trove of wonderfully inane remarks: "At University he did not go to church, understandably since he was an atheist." At the end of part one ("Childhood"): "Graham's potentiality as demonstrated at school was almost nil and has become almost infinite." Sherry's credulity, moreover, is beyond belief—an especially unfortunate characteristic in a biographer of Greene, given the subject's tendency to tell striking yet unsubstantiated anecdotes about himself, to offer highly dubious and glib explanations of queer behavior on his part, and to dismiss patently significant formative events as trifles. Sherry borrows heavily from Greene's memoirs, *A Sort of Life* (1971) and *Ways of Escape* (1980), as well as from his other non-fiction books, and (with a few exceptions) tends to buy Greene's testimony wholesale. He accepts without question, for instance, Greene's claims that as a young man he played Russian roulette (by himself) several times, and that after his boyhood psychoanalysis "he could no longer take an aesthetic interest in any visual thing—staring at a sight that others

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assured him was beautiful, he would feel nothing."

How silly is this book? Here's how silly it is: Sherry finds it necessary to tell us that the title *Goodnight Sweet Ladies* "is from *Hamlet* (Act IV, Scene 5)" and that "Professor Cedric Watts has suggested that the pseudonym Kolley Kibber [used by a character in *Brighton Rock*] is adapted from the eighteenth-century actor-manager and Poet Laureate Colley Cibber." No kidding! He places great emphasis, too, on the correction of minor factual errors in Greene's autobiographical writings (even as he manages to overlook more momentous, if non-factual, lapses). When Greene refers, for instance, to a theater poster advertising *The Private Secretary*, Sherry records triumphantly that the poster could not have been advertising that movie because "it was not playing in Nottingham during Christmas 1925." His air is that of a Biblical scholar discovering heretofore unrecognized historical errors in the Gospels.

Vigilant though he is about such picayune matters, however, Sherry is altogether too quick to try to explain away anything that makes Greene look less than honorable. When confronted with frank acknowledgments by the Master himself of ignominious thoughts or deeds, Sherry tends to downplay the admissions themselves as much as possible and instead often takes the opportunity to commend Greene for his honesty. For instance, Greene writes in *A Sort of Life* that when as a youth he spurned the attractions of Parisian trollops, it was because of his timidity: "It was certainly no sense of morality which restrained me. Morality comes with the sad wisdom of age, when the curiosity has withered." Sherry quotes this remark—which, as the testimony of someone widely considered a major contemporary moralist, must be considered outrageous—but chooses not to comment at all on it, except to praise its "characteristic honesty." Likewise, in his travel book *The Lawless Roads* (1939), Greene admits that he first took up the study of Catholicism for two reasons: one, because he was marrying a member of the Church and felt an obligation to know something about the faith; two, because "it would kill the time." Sherry's bizarre gloss on this colossal flippancy: "Greene's honesty is so pronounced it would be irresponsible to ignore these statements, even though made so many years after conversion. Killing time has been an important activity for him."

In other instances, Sherry tries to turn Greene's vices themselves into virtues by citing them as examples of a relentless intellectual curiosity. Here's Sherry, for instance, letting Greene off the hook for his prodigal whoring: "Greene has such a curiosity about all things in life, that it was inevitable that he would be attracted to profane love." Yet while he is eager to absolve Greene of any serious character flaws (however overwhelming the evidence to the contrary), Sherry routinely comes to unfair, unsubstantiated conclusions about Greene's supporting cast, none of whom seems to have any importance (or even reality) for Sherry.

As for Sherry's prose, he is something less than a world-class stylist. The biography is full of crude redundancies, awkward phrasings which would be quite easy to put right ("Trollope was administrator of the Cathedral but was deeply dissatisfied with the thought of any future which could be represented as a success"), and classic errors of construction: "Trevor Wilson, at one time British Consul in Hanoi and who provided Greene with some insight into the conditions in Vietnam for *The Quiet American*, called on Marion Greene very late in her life." Sherry doesn't appear to be aware of the difference between a restrictive and a non-restrictive clause, or to know about the proper use of hyphens in group modifiers or of colons preceding quotations. Participles dangle all over the place:

> A very sensitive boy, the fact that his physical awkwardness could not be hidden and therefore was obvious to others, filled him with intense shame.

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Many sentences, meanwhile, read like sets of rough notes which Sherry has neglected to turn into finished prose:

> Another aspect of his schizophrenic life at this time was his urge to become a successful writer, though he complained to his mother of not having time to do anything during that final autumn term at Oxford, he had begun a novel and was concerned about publishing his first book of verse.

Above all, Sherry is a master of the long, messy run-on: "From this point of view his adventure with Russian roulette and later his incessant travelling to inaccessible and often dangerous places, is not simply the desire to test himself (the uninspired weakling on the playing fields of Berkhamsted becomes the inspired adventurer off them) but to escape from a depressed condition: '& the bubble gets bigger, & bigger & I want, oh God, how I want to be dead, or asleep or blind drunk . . . so that I can't think.'" Ask yourself: could that sentence be any worse?

Even if Sherry is, in short, a skilled collector of information, he doesn't set it forth with much elegance, and almost invariably misses the point of it all. Yet if one reads between the lines of this biography—or, for that matter, if one skips the biography entirely and reads *A Sort of Life*—one gets a sense, readily enough, of what's truly important here. Plainly, one of the most salient facts is that Greene spent his entire childhood on the grounds of a public school, the Berkhamsted School in Surrey, where his father, Charles Henry Greene, was first a housemaster and then (beginning in 1910) the headmaster—a position in which he remained throughout Greene's own student days at the school. (Greene was graduated from Berkhamsted in 1922.) From his earliest childhood, in short, the Berkhamsted School was Greene's entire universe; its canons and customs, its manners and mores, its ideals and ideas about life, were the only ones—the only establishment-approved ones, anyway—that he knew. If other boys came to this environment fresh from conventional homes (where, naturally, the reigning values and daily routines were quite different from the school's) and were therefore able to put life at Berkhamsted into some sort of context, Greene seems to have grown up viewing the world only from the schoolyard—with the result that the school's way of looking at the world had a more potent, more concentrated influence upon him than it had upon other boys. That the school's way was, by definition, his father's way can only have intensified this influence.

The enduring effect of Berkhamsted on Greene is testified to, in a funny way, by the fact that a number of characters in his novels are themselves preoccupied with their public-school past. One thinks, for instance, of the hapless "old Lancaster boy" in *Brighton Rock*, whose life seems to have gone straight to hell since his school days; of Harris, in *The Heart of the Matter*, who lingers over a copy of his alumni bulletin; and of the way in which the unspeakable perfidy of his best prep-school friend, Harry Lime, leads Rollo Martins, in *The Third Man*, to lose faith in everything that the old school represented to him. Then there is the pathetic journalist Minty in *England Made Me*, with his well-nigh pathological attachment to old Harrow: "The school and he were joined by a painful reluctant coition, a passionless coition that leaves everything to regret, nothing to love, everything to hate, but cannot destroy the idea: we are one body." Greene himself has explicitly acknowledged the centrality of Berkhamsted's impact upon his adult character. "Everything one was to become must have been there, for better or worse," he writes in *A Sort of Life*. "One's future might have been prophesied from the shape of the houses as from the lines of the hand . . . . For twenty years it was to be almost the only scene of happiness, misery, first love, the attempt to write."

It was also the place where Greene first learned about sex—a subject on which his gentle, unworldly father held fanatically Victorian opinions. Although Sherry usually

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doesn't seem to recognize it, these opinions, and the school policies that Greene's father instituted because of them during his headmastership, shed a great deal of light on almost every aspect of Greene's adult life and work. One of his relatives recalls that Greene *père*—a devotee of Charles Kingsley's "muscular Christianity"—was "bewildered by sex," and was fixated on the idea of its sinfulness. One Berkhamsted alumnus recalls that the headmaster's last advice to him was "to be faithful to your future wife"; another remembers being told by the old man to "come to your future wife clean." Gentle though he may have been, we are told that the novelist's father dealt severely with boys caught at the slightest carnal offense, whether it be innocuous kissing or solitary masturbation. According to Claud Cockburn, who was a friend and fellow student of Greene's at Berkhamsted, Greene's father "believed sincerely" that if any two boys were allowed to be alone together for twenty minutes, "sin would occur"; so it was that he imposed on the boys a rigorously organized daily schedule which ensured that none of them would be left idle for a moment—a fact which may help to explain Greene's lifelong restlessness, his seemingly desperate need for travel.

What's more, the zealously reiterated paternal lesson that intimacy leads to sin must have played a large role in the development of Greene's lifelong unease around other people, his profound sense of detachment from the rest of humanity (he is, in Sherry's words, "squeamish about too much intimacy with others"); and the fact that Berkhamsted's masters and prefects were encouraged to spy on boys—and that boys were required to inform on each other when crimes of onanism and the like had been committed—must certainly account in large part for Greene's lifelong interest in espionage, betrayal, loyalty.

It has sometimes been said that Greene tends to write only about the grubbiest of people and the seediest of places. But it is more nearly correct to say that, to Greene's way of thinking, the earth hardly consists of anything else: to him the world is steeped in grubbiness, in seediness—in sin. To read about his father's preoccupation with the filthiness of sex is to begin to understand the origins of this grim *Weltanschauung*. Greene was, after all, taught that sex is the ultimate transgression. And yet sex brings people together; it perpetuates the species. It permeates life—which means, therefore, that *sin* permeates life. If Greene writes about the world as if it were suffused with evil, it is because, to someone who regards sex as the ultimate transgression, the world *is* suffused with evil; and if he creates protagonists who are drawn strongly to great sins, it is because, if sex is considered the ultimate transgression, all men *are* drawn strongly to great sins. (As Mr. Surrogate reflects in *It's a Battlefield*, "Man is a beast, a lecherous beast. He may mate above him, but presently he finds his proper level.") As for Greene's own lack of ethical rigor—for example, his patronization of prostitutes both shortly before and shortly after his marriage—it can, I think, be explained by a fatalistic attitude on Greene's part toward this perceived state of affairs: a feeling, namely, that if one is unable to sublimate one's sexual drives, one is already a prodigious sinner; that there is consequently no point in trying to be virtuous in other ways; and that, on the contrary, an impassioned dedication to and joy in iniquity may in fact prove to be one's only consolation, or (at least) a form of revenge upon the cosmos. Reading through Greene's biography, one sees evidence of such a moral fatalism in operation time and again.

Interestingly enough, moreover, this interpretation pretty much sums up the psychology of one of Greene's most monstrous protagonists: Pinkie, the psychopathic teen-aged gangster at the center of *Brighton Rock*. During the course of the novel, we learn that Pinkie was raised as a Catholic and was taught that sex is evil. Consequently he is at once a virgin and a murderer: feeling a "prick of sexual desire" for a woman "disturbed him like a sickness. Was there no escape—anywhere—for

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anyone? It was worth murdering a world." Pinkie's way of coping with the world's wickedness, in short, is not to succumb to his agony over the wickedness, but to glory in it, and to contribute to it himself as fully as possible. Now Graham Greene, as a boy, was not quite a murderer, but neither was he completely unlike Pinkie. Even in his childhood, according to Peter Quennell, "his talk had an exuberantly sceptical and blithely pessimistic turn; and his contemplation of the horrors of human life appeared to cause him unaffected pleasure .... At each fresh insight into human absurdity or wickedness, his pallid, faintly woebegone face would assume an air of solemn glee."

There is no getting around the fact, though Sherry somehow manages to do so, that Quennell's account (which Sherry quotes from a memoir, *The Marble Foot*) paints a portrait of a very sick boy. Even the sketchiest chronicle of his late childhood and early youth makes it clear that Greene was most dreadfully disturbed: during his teens, he claims, he attempted suicide a number of times by various means; at sixteen, he suffered a nervous breakdown and underwent the aforementioned psychoanalysis (the treatment left him no less detached, but, it is said, considerably more self-assured); at twenty, while a student at Balliol College, Oxford, he went to a dentist and, "to escape the 'oppression of boredom,'" pretended to be suffering from an abscess and had a perfectly good tooth extracted.

It was during the same period—on six different occasions within half a year—that Greene supposedly engaged in his now-famous series of suicide attempts, holding a loaded revolver to his head and pulling the trigger. Sherry completely credits this story, and accepts Greene's explanation that it was part of "a life-long war against boredom"; by pointing a gun at his head, Greene later explained, he sought "to escape boredom . . . to get more out of life." This may well be true, but it begs the question: why should a talented, well-heeled, relatively intelligent young man be so bored? Boredom on such a scale is pathological—a sign of deep psychological disturbance, of an enduring immaturity and selfishness, of a disquieting lack of consideration for one's family and friends. It also contains an element of outright snobbery; for to complain about boredom is, after all, the prerogative of the spoiled child, and to air such a grievance is almost a way of bragging about one's advantages. Indeed, though Sherry dutifully records every bit of Greene's aberrant adolescent behavior, he seems not to realize quite how aberrant it is; nor does he acknowledge how profound an influence the abnormal psychology of the boy has had upon the literary *oeuvre* of the man, whose novels are swarming with characters who commit, contemplate, or at least talk about suicide. (One of the things that are most unsettling about the alleged Russian-roulette episode, alas, is that Greene himself, who is willing enough to discuss it, has to this day given no indication of being unsettled by it.)

In similar fashion, Sherry writes about Greene's undergraduate flirtation with espionage as if it were perfectly natural—or, at least, spunky and harmlessly amusing. It happened this way: in 1924, during an outbreak of unrest between the French and Germans in the Ruhr, the nineteen-year-old Greene contacted the first secretary of the German embassy in London and proposed an arrangement. If the Germans would provide covert financing for a journey by him to the Ruhr, he would write, on his return, pro-German articles for the newspapers at heavily pro-French Oxford. The Germans liked the idea, and the deal was struck. Sherry doesn't seem at all to recognize the questionableness of Greene's clandestine association with a recent enemy power. Nor, though Sherry finds Greene's escapade "daring," and admires him for his "appreciation of [the] futility" of the Germans' elaborate secrecy, does he remark on the manifest elitist cockiness of the enterprise. Yet it is hard not to recognize this episode as a crucial one in the history of Greene's moral evolution—or lack thereof. Claud

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Cockburn describes the nineteen-year-old Greene as "the greatest case of arrested development he had ever met"— and the fact is that Greene's dealings with the German government bespeak a level of indifference to ethical considerations that can be described only as infantile. This incident would seem to be one of the earliest examples of Greene's moral fatalism at work—his cynical feeling, in other words, that, man being as beastly as he is, one might as well join the fun; and one suspects that its manifestation in such a frivolous and sophomoric form can be attributed to a boyhood spent exclusively in a public school—in an environment, that is, which predisposed the teenager to view everything (except, of course, sex) as a game, and in which he must have considered himself a sort of court favorite, a specially privileged being, exempt from the usual punishments.

Much the same sort of thinking would seem to be behind Greene's enrollment in the Communist Party in 1925. At the time, he told a friend that Communism was "the only future," but Sherry says now that the enlistment was only "another student escapade," a "ruse to allow Greene to visit Paris and the Communist headquarters there." If this is true, Greene's action again shows the ease with which he could adopt positions on international affairs to serve his most shallow private whims. Sherry doesn't touch on this point. Nor does he have much to say about Greene's quite un-Communistic service, during the General Strike of 1926, as a strike-breaker and special constable, duties which Greene claims to have accepted "[m]ore from curiosity than from any wish to support the Establishment." In neither of these instances does Greene seem to have shown a commitment to anything beyond his own immediate pleasure.

Greene's complaints of boredom—and his supposed attraction to suicide—did not disappear after the Russian-roulette incidents. On the heels of his graduation from Oxford, he took a job with the British American Tobacco Company which (had he not resigned at the last minute) would have taken him to China for several years. His letters to his then-fiancée, Vivien, characterize the job as a form of suicide. "China," he writes, "would be a splendid sort of suicide-without-scandal-touch. And I agree with you that one doesn't want to go on much longer." Similarly, he suggests in a subsequent letter that "the only thing worth doing at the moment seems to be to go & get killed somehow in an exciting manner." Sherry doesn't get far beneath the surface of this sort of remark, which seems to speak volumes about the irresponsible motives behind his lifelong globe-trotting, and especially behind his attraction to trouble spots.

In much the same vein, and far more offensive, are some comments in yet another missive Greene wrote during this period: "One can't help envying the people of my age in 1914. Everything at any rate was absolutely settled for them. Nothing they could do could alter their fate. They were either going to die or live, & they could just drift with the crowd. I should like the Germans better than ever, if only they'd start a show [i.e., a war] now again." And, as if one needed any further evidence of Greene's coldheartedness, a chilling illustration is provided by a couple of letters relating to the demise of his favorite uncle. The first was written just before the event: "I shall hear tomorrow whether my uncle's pulled through . . . . What annoys me most is that it should have come & spoilt my mother's holiday." The second was written immediately afterwards: "I don't feel much cut up. It must be pretty beastly for my mother, as he was her only brother." Greene may sound like an eight-year-old here, but he's actually twenty-two. "There is a splinter of ice in the heart of a writer," he has written; in his case it would seem to be something considerably larger than a splinter.

Greene has given no indication, to this day, that he feels any differently than he did when he expressed these less-than-attractive sentiments about suicide, war, and a relative's death. That he did express such sentiments is of more than passing importance,

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of course, because Greene is not just any famous novelist: he is a writer who has long been celebrated—and, in many quarters, revered—for his left-wing politics. These early documents, however, suggest strongly that Greene's politics owe little or nothing to any natural sympathy for the masses; on the contrary, the enthusiasm implied in these letters for diversion at any cost—even if that cost be a suicide that leaves his loved ones in emotional torment, or a global conflict that leaves millions dead, mutilated, or homeless—could exist only in someone utterly devoid of compassion. To some Marxists, the human catastrophes that have been brought about by their social philosophy may seem a good reason to give up the faith; to a man like Greene, eager to witness the bloody "show" that a Marxist revolution and its aftermath would furnish, those catastrophes would seem to be as good a reason as any to adopt the faith. Greene himself admits as much in a 1984 interview with *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (in the last sentence of which he makes a sharp turn from frivolousness into a pretense of serious radicalism): "I was always drawn to those countries where the political situation involved a game of life and death . . . . I was always interested in turning-points and found them in Asia and Africa, in Central and Latin America. Literature, you know, helps the fight against dictatorial regimes and I did what I could to contribute to this fight."

The more one reads about Greene's life, in fact, the more one recognizes that his leftism is anything but serious; it is the leftism not of a man of the people but of a man of privilege, ever alert to his privileges—one of which is the freedom to take absurd, cynical, and self-righteous political positions without suffering in the slightest on their account. His are, one might say, the politics of the headmaster's son who, in a very real sense, has never left the schoolyard; they are the politics of the Balliol student who never received the slightest punishment for his callous flirtation with the German embassy and the Communist Party.

Certainly class snobbery has always been a key component of Greene's sensibility. From Nottingham Park, where he lived for several months in a poor neighborhood after throwing over the position with British American Tobacco, he complained in a letter to Vivien that "[o]ne sees absolutely no one here of one's own class." Time and again in this biography, he shows himself to be virtually incapable of communicating with ordinary people. As a matter of fact, what is often characterized as his contempt for the living conditions of the poverty-ridden—whether in England or the Third World—would appear in reality to be a sublimated contempt for indigent folk themselves. During his first trip to Mexico, Greene wrote about "the hideous inexpressiveness of brown eyes . . . . If Spain is like this, I can understand the temptation to massacre." In one Mexican town, he was delighted to meet a Norwegian woman and her two blonde daughters, whom he found "startlingly beautiful in a land where you grow weary of black and oily hair and brown sentimental eyes." Greene's criticisms, in his memoirs and travel books, of the mediocre food, shabby lodgings, and medieval plumbing in such places remind one less of the social outrage of a John Jacob Riis than of the imperious whinings of a pampered Oxbridgean on a slumming tour. Greene often seems to be holding up to ridicule the very idea that the people who live in such places might really *matter*—that they might lead meaningful, even happy, lives. If his novels are full of killers and spies, it's partly because he's incapable of finding the world of common people anything other than a dreary joke, something to patronize, to place in facile ironic contrast to the fear and terror with which secret agents and murderers typically live.

His early twenties were important years for Greene: he married a young woman named Vivien Dayrell-Browning, converted to Catholicism (about which more presently), and worked as a sub-editor on the *Nottingham Journal* and the London *Times*. He

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also wrote and published the first of his twenty-six novels. Set in nineteenth-century England, *The Man Within* (1929) is far from his best work (the title derives from Sir Thomas Browne: "There's another man within me that's angry with me"), but it is worth examining in some detail—partly because it introduces many of his most familiar themes and motifs, and partly because it illuminates Greene's feelings about his father in a way that none of his later books would do.

The protagonist of *The Man Within* is a very young man named Andrews, who as the novel opens has been working for three years as a smuggler along the Sussex coast. Now, having informed on his confederates—six of whom have been arrested—and having been pursued through the countryside by the three other gang members who remain at large, he finds refuge in a humble cottage with a nineteen-year-old stranger named Elizabeth. As in many a Greene novel to come, our hero promptly falls for this young lady whom fate has thrown in his path, and she returns the favor. Fortunately, not only is Elizabeth altogether perfect—impossibly wise, loving, and beautiful—but her stepfather has just died (his body, laid out in Elizabeth's house, is the first of many unsubtle *memento mori* in Greene's work) and she is therefore, quite conveniently, in need of a man. Greene, it should be said, never quite brings Elizabeth to life; she's more a young man's romantic conception—a boys'-school ideal of womanhood—than a real person: though provincial, friendless, and innocent, she is nonetheless preternaturally astute, and when Andrews's former partners in crime catch up with him she proves totally fearless. She ultimately becomes, moreover, the first of many Greene characters to be drawn—by chance or error—into a hazardous affair not of their making, and to perish as a result.

Why did Andrews turn his fellows in? Interestingly, the answer centers upon Andrews's feelings about his father. The senior Andrews, we learn, was a very successful smuggler, revered by his colleagues as brave, adventurous, and loyal; yet Andrews, as a boy, knew—and hated—him as a conceited, ignorant wife-beater. When his father died, Andrews was removed from his Devonshire school by Carlyon, one of his father's associates, and was (so to speak) taken into the firm; there his resentment of his late father grew, for, unlike the old man, the timid, sensitive Andrews was not a born smuggler: "I could do nothing which was not weighed up with my father and found wanting." Yet he found a substitute father in Carlyon, who is as much of a boys'-school conception as Elizabeth; bold and manly though he is, Carlyon also (like Andrews's mother) loves poetry and music, is deeply intelligent and good-hearted, and has "a voice as near to music as any voice I've ever heard." Carlyon, indeed, became for Andrews the focus both of a newfound devotion and of his transferred hostility for his real father; Andrews hardly knew "whether the twisted feeling at his heart when he uttered the name [of Carlyon] was love or hate." It was out of this jumble of emotions that his betrayal grew. Andrews double-crossed his comrades, he explains, because "I had a father whom I hated and he was always being put before me as a model. It made me mad. And I'm a coward . . . . I was afraid of being hurt and I hated the sea and the noise and the danger. And unless I did something it would have gone on for always and always. And I wanted to show those men that I was someone to be considered, that I had the power to smash all their plans." He wanted, too, to prove that he was Carlyon's match: "Haven't I outwitted the fool now? . . . I've shown them that I'm of importance now."

Like the protagonists of many Greene novels to come, Andrews is two men in one. He knows he's "made up of . . . the sentimental, bullying, desiring child and another more stern critic." Like many Greene heroes, moreover, Andrews is preoccupied with the idea that he's "a coward and altogether despicable." Like those other heroes, he lives in a grim world of chaos and mistrust, and wonders whether

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he will ever know "peace from pursuit"; peace, we are told, "was a sanity which he did not believe that he had ever known." What's more, Andrews has faced a predicament that confronts many a Greene protagonist: the conflict between personal loyalty and some more or less worthy motive, which may be anything from the confused Freudian impulses that rack Andrews's heart to the desire of the hero in *The Third Man* to bring his best friend to justice.

Another moral predicament familiar to readers of Greene is that posed by sex. The distinctive position on this subject which Greene communicates in his later novels—and which clearly has its origin in his father's austere teachings on the subject—makes its first blunt appearance here. Even someone who knew nothing about Greene's life would be able to conclude, from *The Man Within*, that its young author suffered from what is essentially a severe virgin/whore complex—a conviction that fornication is sinful, that the truest and purest sort of romantic love should thus be free of the taint of sexual attraction, and that consequently (man being concupiscent by nature) the betrayal of one's beloved is inevitable. Elizabeth, in Andrews's eyes, has "mystery," "a kind of sanctity which blurred and obscured his desire with love"; with a prostitute, however (into whose bed he falls at the first opportunity), there's "no love and no reverence. The animal in him could ponder her beauty crudely and lustfully." It's not just the young Andrews, moreover, who feels this way about women; the worldly Carlyon shares the same philosophy, remarking to Elizabeth that she's "full of disgusting physical needs. You'll never find a man who will love you for anything but a bare, unfilled-in outline of yourself . . . . Only a woman can love a real person." Romantic love is one thing, physical desire another: succumbing to the trollop's modest charms, Andrews "had turned a deaf ear to what his heart . . . had asked of him, but he had capitulated at the first hungry wail his dirty, lusting body had uttered." Greene does not hesitate to give this conflict a religious foundation. "Are you a devil as well as a harlot?" Andrews asks the puzzled whore (who hadn't counted on a philosophical discussion); although he doesn't fear death, he has "a terror of life, of going on soiling himself and repenting and soiling himself again."

Like many later Greene heroes, then, Andrews is attracted to the idea of death as an eternal sanctuary from danger and from the possibility of sin. (If life, he reflects, "were barren of desire and of the need of any action how sweet [it] would be.") Yet he fears extinction because "I am all that I have, I'm afraid of losing that." To the author of *The Man Within*, God is not a manifestation of, or an explanation for, our sense of closeness to others, but a force that works in opposition to an attraction to others, and that occupies the void which other people fail to fill. As in most of Greene's other novels, Christian imagery proliferates here: Carlyon is described as a Christ figure and Andrews as "a sort of Judas" who denies Carlyon (and Elizabeth as well) several times. (For good measure, he introduces himself at one point as "Absalom.")

There are many other characteristics that *The Man Within* shares with Greene's later novels: the ironic conjunction of comfortable and terrorized lives; the image of a desperate fugitive arriving (often incognito) in an unfamiliar place and falling for a strange woman; a concern with the themes of flight and pursuit, good and evil, love and loyalty, courage and cowardice, justice and injustice, the longing for peace and the necessity of action; the distinct implication that the protagonist's alienation, hunted-ness, need for disguise, and desire for escape are a satisfactory metaphor for the human condition; and the notion that man is best ruled by his heart, not his mind. In this book, moreover, Greene establishes his sentimental—and, ultimately, self-serving—enthusiasm for what he calls "baseless dreaming": "Suppose that after all a man . . . chose his dreams whether they were to be good or evil. Then, even though he were untrue to them,

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some credit was owing simply to the baseless dreaming. They were potentialities, aspects, and no man could tell whether suddenly and without warning they might not take control and turn the coward for one instant into the hero."

Like Greene's later books, too, *The Man Within* profits from a vigorous style, a strong narrative sense, and a meticulous attention to atmospheric detail. Yet, like many of its successors, it abounds in hyperbolic rhetoric. Elizabeth's dead stepfather has "the peace of God in his face"; at his burial, "the falling clods were a measurement of time, recording the vanishing moments of his peace." Time, in fact, "was here in the cottage. Clocks ticked and hands went round as everywhere else in the world. He [Andrews] had a sense of time rushing past him, rushing like a Gadarene swine to destruction."

The best thing one can say about *The Man Within* is that it's an elegant contrivance—a fastidiously well-made novel whose restrictions of time, place, and number of characters are thoroughly intentional, and whose author's patent naïveté is largely compensated for by his impressive sense of pacing and of dramatic shape. Yet it is that naïveté, alas, which leaves the most lasting impression: the characters' endless chatter about God, conscience, cowardice, and so forth serves only to remind one, on virtually every page, of the narrow boundaries of the author's immature and self-romanticizing view of life. Greene emerges as a callow, narcissistic young man raised on an equation of sex and sin, accustomed to self-indulgence, to the guilt that follows, and to the self-indulgent pleasure of confession that follows that. Even Greene recognizes—to some extent, anyway—the book's deficiencies: the Penguin paperback reprint is prefaced with an apologetic Author's Note, added a couple of decades after the book's publication, in which Greene acknowledges its "embarrassingly romantic" tone and "derivative" style but asks that he be allowed, by its reissuance, "one sentimental gesture towards his own past, the period of ambition and hope." (An interesting comment, by the way, given that much of Greene's fiction is fundamentally a sentimental gesture.)

The Man Within won a wide readership, and Greene went on to write two more historical romances: *The Name of Action* (1930) and *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931). Both books, however, were failures (neither has been in print for decades), and Greene—who had quit his *Times* job on the strength of his first novel's success—decided to shift genres dramatically. The result was *Stamboul Train* (1932), issued in the United States as *Orient Express*; a best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic, it inaugurated a series of fictions—most of them melodramatic, a few farcical—which Greene would later classify as "entertainments" as a way of distinguishing them from his more serious novels. And certainly there is nothing serious about *Stamboul Train*. Its characters—all of them passengers on the Orient Express from Ostend to Constantinople—are essentially caricatures who can be adequately described in five or six words apiece. Like the *dramatis personae* of many a Greene novel, they comprise a motley crew: Carleton Myatt, a good-hearted Jewish bachelor in the currant business (one of many Jews, often ashamedly hiding behind Gentile-sounding names, who may be found in Greene's fiction); Coral Musker, a lonely, insecure young English dancer; Mabel Warren, a tough, ruthless lesbian journalist; Janet Pardoe, her lovely but fickle young protégée; Quin Savory, a vulgar, social-climbing Cockney novelist; Mr. Opie, a fatuous Anglican cleric; and Dr. Czinner, a gallant socialist insurgent headed for Belgrade (incognito, naturally) to take part in a revolution.

But one doesn't read such entertainments in order to acquaint oneself with towering, full-blooded characters; one reads them for the reason one reads any thriller, to see how the story will come out. Will Coral end up with Myatt? Will Janet leave Mabel? Will Myatt's crucial negotiations in Constantinople be resolved to his satisfaction? And how will they all be affected by the unstable

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political situation in Yugoslavia? In bringing together these frankly one-dimensional characters, Greene makes abundant use of the melodramatist's book of tricks: coincidences and improbabilities proliferate, romances spring up out of nowhere, lives are reshuffled as swiftly and gracefully as a deck of cards. And yet his painstaking use of realistic atmospheric details lends the far-fetched story a certain transient plausibility; in many ways—its economical but vivid establishment of settings, its brisk cutting from one set of characters to another, its unflagging sense of movement—the book is almost aggressively cinematic. A great deal happens here, and none of it means anything: it's entertainment, pure and simple. Yes, the characters do exchange ideas about religion and politics, but these ideas are there not for their own sake but to establish character, to explain motivations, to set an urbane tone; to Greene the entertainer, no idea matters as much as the forward movement of the story. As he writes of another entertainment, *The Third Man*, "[r]eality . . . was only a background to a fairy tale."

This generalization holds true for all of the entertainments that Greene published in the wake of *Stamboul Train*. The earliest of these is *A Gun for Sale* (1936), the story of a European political crisis whose chief players are a hired assassin, a munitions king, a war minister, a female hostage, and a detective named Mather. Then there's *The Confidential Agent* (1939), wherein a secret agent known only as D. travels to England to secure a contract for the delivery of coal to his civil-war-torn homeland. As is typical in a Greene entertainment, D. unknowingly meets Rose Cullen, the daughter of the British coal baron Lord Benditch, on the Channel crossing and falls quickly in love; and, after checking into a London rooming house, he just as rapidly wins the undying loyalty of Else, a fourteen-year-old serving-girl. His ensuing cat-and-mouse game with an enemy agent—who's out to thwart D.'s deal with Lord Benditch—occasions both amusing episodes and a plethora of appropriately bleak assertions about the difficulty of moral choice and the impossibility of perfect trust. Part of what makes this book entertaining, indeed, is its insistent, calculatedly cynical depiction of a world of "treachery and dependence," a world in which God is a "joker," in which "[t]he dead were to be envied" because "[i]t was the living who had to suffer from loneliness and distrust," a world in which the hero's "territory was death: he could love the dead and the dying better than the living, [who] were robbed of reality by their complacent safety." Such passages serve much the same atmosphere-setting function here that a hard-bitten Bogart hero's misanthropic *mots* serve in a movie like *Casablanca* or *Key Largo*. The book's logic, meanwhile, operates according to classic Hitchcock-movie rules: the characters flirt and trade quips even though their lives are in immediate peril; the mundane regularly appears alongside the life-or-death (e.g., an endangered D. finds himself in a room where "Hints to the Young Housewife" is playing on the radio).

Greene follows the same solemnity-and-suspense formula in several of his other entertainments. Take, for instance, *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), the Blitz-era story of a man who pines for his lost childhood only to fall victim to a bomb which destroys his memory of the last twenty years and thus ironically effects his escape from adulthood's "savage country." Or *The Third Man* (1950), in which Rollo Martins, investigating the death of his old school friend Harry Lime in postwar Vienna, discovers that Harry's not dead but in hiding from the police; he's been selling impure black-market penicillin and thus ensuring the deaths of innumerable hospitalized children. Martins is forced to choose between loyalty to a friend and larger, more abstract allegiances. (If the book reads like a film treatment rather than a novel or an entertainment—strong on action, that is, but slapdash in style—it's because it *is* a film treatment; as Greene himself admits in his preface, Carol Reed's famous motion picture "is better than the story because it

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is in this case the finished state of the story.")[2] Then there's *Our Man in Havana* (1958), wherein a divorced Englishman named Wormold, the owner of a less-than-flourishing vacuum-cleaner outlet in Havana, is approached by a mysterious representative of MI6; since he can use the money, he agrees to be the Foreign Office's man in Havana, and proceeds to recruit fictitious sub-agents and to file utterly fabricated accounts of enemy espionage activity (including specious Soviet atomic-weapons plans which he has in fact based on vacuum-cleaner designs). His reports win praise from his superiors in London—but then the game turns deadly as the real people with whose names he has christened his sub-agents start being liquidated. Though it's a one-gag story, the joke is played out amusingly enough (at least throughout the first half of the book); the problem is that the outrageous humor is accompanied by an incongruously bleak *mise en scène* and by mordant pronouncements which, while no darker than those found in *The Confidential Agent* and *The Third Man*, seem utterly at odds with the farcical story.

Greene's last two entertainments are considerably less gloomy. The exceedingly brief *Loser Takes All* (1955), which he describes in his dedication as a "frivolity," relates the whimsical but slight story of an unadventurous assistant accountant who strikes it rich in Monte Carlo while on his honeymoon. And *Travels with My Aunt* (1969) details, with ample charm and occasional hilarity, the adventures of a similarly drab retired banker named Henry Pulling, who, after his mother's death, is plucked from his quiet bachelor life in suburban London by his vivacious, globe-trotting seventy-five-year-old Aunt Augusta. His aunt, whom he hasn't met in a half-century, takes Henry under her wing, spiriting him to Paris, Istanbul, and Paraguay, introducing him to a wide variety of idiosyncratic phenomena (not the least of which is her large young African lover, Wordsworth), and drawing him into what turns out to be a trafficking scheme.

Though perhaps the merriest of all Greene's books, *Travels with My Aunt* nonetheless touches upon many of the themes of his more serious novels. Most important, it dramatizes—in the encounter between Pulling and his aunt—the key Greenian conflict between innocence and experience. As ever, Greene strongly favors the latter, implying that Aunt Augusta's experience—even her criminality—is preferable to Pulling's innocence, that her ethical imperfection has given her a more sophisticated moral understanding than her nephew. But Greene doesn't push these notions down our throats; he keeps things light, making sure that all the references to religion are funny ("I sometimes believe in a Higher Power," says Aunt Augusta, "even though I am a Catholic") and making the coincidences even more fantastic than usual (Pulling, for instance, meets an American girl named Tooley on the Orient Express, and later runs into her father—a CIA man—in Argentina).

Stamboul Train was not only the first of Greene's entertainments; it also gave rise to three other books whose intentions seem—at times, anyway—to be more serious than those of the entertainments. The desire to tell a diverting story is not Greene's sole, or even his primary, aim in these books: Greene the storyteller shares control with Greene the social philosopher and metaphysician, whose objective is to essay an indictment of English statecraft and/or soulcraft. To be sure, as in *Stamboul Train* and the other entertainments, atmospheric detail is important in these three novels; the difference here is that Greene seems to make calculated use of his command of this detail to make himself appear equally authoritative in regard to other matters, in particular political situations and religious verities. Yet all three of these books are conspicuously

2 Greene's equally slapdash book, *The Tenth Man*, written in 1944 but first issued only in 1985, was likewise composed not as a novel but as a film story for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

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unsuccessful; it is as if Greene thought that all he needed to do, in order to write first-rate serious novels rather than light thrillers, was to plug away more insistently at the grim atmospherics and at the fatalistic commentary about highfalutin (and often capitalized) abstractions—Faith, Justice, Guilt, Love, Hate—while keeping the characters as flat (and, in most cases, less colorful and distinctive) and the fatalism every bit as facile as in the entertainments. Needless to say, Greene was badly mistaken in this regard; all three of these novels are notable for their pretentiousness, contrivance, rhetorical excess, and downright dullness.

The first of these books, *It's a Battlefield* (1934), concerns the swirl of events surrounding the sentencing to death of Jim Drover, a London bus driver. Drover, an active member of the British Communist Party, has been found guilty of the unpremeditated murder of a policeman, who (he thought) was about to strike Drover's wife, Milly, during a Communist riot. On the heels of the sentencing, the Assistant Commissioner of Police—who is known throughout the novel only by that title—is requested by a Cabinet minister's secretary to look into the possible political benefits of a reprieve for Drover. Meanwhile Drover's brother, Conrad, does his best to effect the reduction of Drover's sentence to a long term of imprisonment; a wealthy, virtuous aristocrat named Lady Caroline Bury (another *memento-mori* monicker) works toward the same end on purely humanitarian grounds; and Mr. Surrogate, a Communist Party leader, is less interested in saving Drover's skin than in making use of him as a public-relations tool, a symbol.

The novel's ultimate point is clear: to demonstrate that the English system of justice is capricious and inequitable, that well-meaning citizens are impotent to change it, and that the remainder are all too willing to co-operate cynically with it for their own selfish purposes. Or, as Greene puts it: "The world . . . was run by the whims of a few men, the whims of a politician, a journalist, a bishop and a policeman. They hanged this man and pardoned that; one embezzler was in prison, but other men of the same kind were sent to Parliament." Even the Assistant Commissioner, a relatively decent man, survives only by distancing himself, as much as he can, from the unfair criteria which lie behind the decisions it is his job to enforce; he lives, in other words, according to a philosophy of narrowly defined duty not to justice but to Scotland Yard. The unmarried journalist Conder, meanwhile, deals with the narrowness of his own life by leading a fantasy life in which he is a husband and father. If there is anything here that Greene wants us to admire, it's Lady Caroline's faith—a faith not in the system or in any religion but a faith nonetheless which "perhaps . . . was unshakable because of its vagueness."

Like Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, a book that Greene greatly admires, *It's a Battlefield* is rich with gray urban detail, much of it superbly rendered. But Greene gets much too heavy-handed, including in one chapter a description of a prison whose inmates work—depending on the level of their skills—in either Block A, B, or C, and in the next chapter a description of an equally cheerless factory run on precisely the same system. (Get it? An English factory is a prison, too.) And Conder's overly reiterated need of a fantasy life, far from being touching, comes off as implausible and ridiculous; one cannot possibly take it seriously as a symbol of man's need to escape a horrible and lonely world. ("[E]very word, every phrase, every fake image [of Conder's invented life] was an indictment . . . against life, life without children or wife or home.") Like many other novels written in the 1930s, *It's a Battlefield* too often suffers from the bitter, synthetic taste of socialist realism.

England Made Me (1935) offers another dose of anti-capitalist message-mongering. The setting this time is Stockholm, although most of the principal characters are English. They include Erik Krogh, an extraordinarily rich Swedish industrialist whose involve-

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ment in a risky, unscrupulous business transaction could, if publicized, ruin him; Kate Farrant, Krogh's young, well-born English mistress (and the novel's part-time narrator) who loves her brother more than she does Krogh; Anthony Farrant, her ungrateful, ne'er-do-well sibling, for whom Kate arranges a job that places him at Krogh's right hand; and Minty, a scruffy, puerile English journalist who is willing to pay handsomely for information about Krogh. From early in the book, one can see the developments coming (sluggishly) across the Baltic. Meanwhile almost everything one is expected to believe is utterly unbelievable: one is told that Krogh is the richest man in the world, that Anthony and Kate have a deep-seated, all-enduring love for each other (which may, it's hinted, cross the line into incestuous lust), that the most trivial news about Krogh's life is of extreme interest to local journalists—and none of it rings true. Hardest of all to swallow is the subplot involving Andersson, a laborer in Krogh's factory who, possessed of a grievance, shows up in his workman's uniform at a fancy-dress affair attended by Krogh and finds himself brutally ejected; this episode, intended to demonstrate the ruthless exploitation of the lower classes by the upper, reads like bad Upton Sinclair. The switches between first- and third-person narrative, moreover, seem all but pointless. Padded and empty, with more than its share of abortive attempts at cleverness, this novel feels bogus from beginning to end.

Three years later, Greene published *Brighton Rock*, a novel whose immense reputation doubtless stems largely from the fact that it was his most "serious" book to date. Set in the English beach resort town of Brighton, it centers on Pinkie, a ruthless seventeen-year-old gang leader who, on a beautiful summer day, murders Charles Hale, a shabby newspaper hireling who has incurred his wrath. It's a perfect crime, except for one thing: Ida Arnold, a young lady who happened to meet Hale during his last hours and who doesn't accept the police conclusion that he died a natural death, has chosen to investigate on her own. Her persistent inquiries cause the inhumanly vicious Pinkie to take further action, committing more murders and marrying an uncommonly virtuous waitress named Rose—who witnessed a pivotal event on the day of Hale's murder—in order to prevent her from testifying against him. (Greene had made earlier use of this gimmick, by the way, in *England Made Me*.)

Not a bad plot for a Graham Greene entertainment. As the story proceeds, however, one comes to realize that Greene's principal motive in these pages is not to divert but to impart some extremely unusual ideas about good and evil. Accordingly, the novel's thriller-like elements increasingly give way to bizarre—and even repugnant—lines of dialogue and bits of narrative. Pinkie, we learn, was raised as a Roman Catholic, was instructed by priests in the immorality of sex, and is consequently a virgin whose butchery we are apparently meant to understand as the response of an anguished soul to the world's depravity. (He had, we are told, "held intimacy back as long as he could at the end of a razor blade.") Whatever its origin, however, Pinkie's evil, in Greene's view, brings him nearer to God than those of us who have not murdered in cold blood. (Experience over innocence, you see.) As Charles Péguy writes in a passage that serves as the epigraph to *The Heart of the Matter*, "The sinner is at the heart of Christianity. No one is as competent as the sinner in the matter of Christianity. No one, if he is not a saint." *Brighton Rock* is, quite simply, about Pinkie's competence in the matter of Christianity. It is a competence he shares with the devout Rose—who, like him, was reared a Catholic—but not with Ida, a mere Anglican. Pinkie's evil, as a matter of fact, is drawn magnet-like to Rose's virtue; Greene writes of Pinkie and Rose that "[w]hat was most evil in him needed her: it couldn't get along without goodness." Ida, on the other hand, is "as far from either of them as she was from Hell—or Heaven."

There's something else that Pinkie and Rose share: the odd conviction that their

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sexual congress, married or not, constitutes a mortal sin. It's a view with which Greene plainly means for us to sympathize. By the same token, he wants us to disdain Ida for her easy virtue. "I like doing what's right," Ida declares at one point—only to add, when reminded that she has slept with men, "Oh, that. That's not wrong. That does no one any harm. That's not like murder." Ha! The point of Greene's irony is that fornication *is* like murder, a fact of which Pinkie and Rose are aware and of which Ida is not. But sex isn't the only front on which Ida, to Greene's way of thinking, deserves disparagement. "It's fun to be alive," she continually proclaims, and to Greene this kind of earthbound gaiety is an offense; as someone says in *The Heart of the Matter*, "Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil—or else an absolute ignorance." (It is no accident, of course, that the action of *Brighton Rock* takes place against the ironic backdrop of a beach resort's temporal pleasures, and that more than one *memento mori* is on the scene—including, incidentally, a horse named Memento Mori.) Rose worries about confession and repentance; Ida counters, "That's just religion . . . . Believe me, it's the world we got to deal with."

No, Greene is saying, it's *not* just the world we've got to deal with. But his attempt to press upon the reader the importance of spiritual matters is infinitely complicated by the eccentricity of his understanding of these matters. His view of God and man, in other words, is an exceedingly perverse one, and he communicates it in a perverse way. Both Pinkie and Rose (whose willingness to marry him, even though she fully believes that it ensures her eternal damnation, is utterly baffling) are preposterous characters, their behavior untrue to the nature of normal human psychology, the workings of their minds virtually inaccessible; their tendency to chatter perpetually about theological abstractions would seem unlikely in a Catholic intellectual, let alone in a gangster and a waitress from Brighton. We're expected to sympathize with Pinkie's emotional torment, but his obsessiveness about sin seems merely psychopathic; and the details about his childhood—which are supposed to help us to understand his evil—feel altogether spurious. This information, moreover, is only told to us; we're never given a chance to *see* Pinkie's sensibility in utero, to see how Catholicism helped to make him what he is today.

Near the end of the book, an old priest tells Rose a story about a certain Frenchman: "He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation . . . . This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. I don't know, my child, but some people think he was—well, a saint. I think he died in what we are told is mortal sin—I'm not sure; it was in the war; perhaps . . . . You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone—the . . . appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God." The implication here—that Pinkie may be, in some sense, a saint—is one that it is impossible to accept sincerely; this sort of thinking represents an offense against the genuinely good, the true saints.

It is a sort of thinking, however, that informs not only *Brighton Rock* but several of the novels that succeed it: *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951), and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961). These so-called "Catholic novels" are widely considered to be Greene's pivotal works; and together with the more explicitly political novels that followed—*The Quiet American* (1956), *The Comedians* (1966), *The Honorary Consul* (1973), and *The Human Factor* (1978)—they are generally viewed as the core of Greene's *oeuvre*. Most of these books were set in places Greene had visited during decades of travelling, whether as an independent writer, a foreign correspondent, or (during World War II) as an agent of Britain's Secret Service. For the most part, indeed, the story of his adult life—which Sherry gets underway in his first volume and which Greene

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recounts in *Ways of Escape*—is a catalogue not only of novels, plays, and film scripts written, but also of lengthy sojourns in such places as Mexico, Sierra Leone, Argentina, French Indochina, Malaya, Kenya, the Belgian Congo, Papa Doc's Haiti, and Stalinist Poland.

The Catholic and political novels which grew out of these travels represent something of an apotheosis of the Greenian sensibility—a consummation, as it were, of a bizarre approach to religion and morality which can be traced clearly to Greene's boyhood on the grounds of Berkhamsted. In order to understand as fully as possible how Greene came to write these novels, it is first necessary to attend to the history of his involvement with Catholicism, to which he converted in his early twenties, and with which he has had an enigmatic relationship ever since. The second installment of this essay will examine not only Greene's peculiarly constituted Catholicism but also all of his serious novels from *The Power and the Glory* to last year's *The Captain and the Enemy*.

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"An aristocrat in the public square": José Ortega y Gasset

by Mark Falcoff

The role of the intellectual in "backward"—that is, largely non-industrial—societies has been one of the major themes of the twentieth century. This is not surprising, since no previous period of history has opened the road to power to so many practitioners of ideas—though in societies in which literacy has been rather problematical. As a matter of fact, one of the principal ways the "underdeveloped" (or, as we now say, "developing") world differs from Western Europe and the United States is the almost sacerdotal role assigned to individual writers, poets, playwrights, historians, and philosophers. The contrast between that situation and our own could not be starker, and it provokes much anguish in our literary papers. Look at Senegal, we are typically reproached by critics of our own (rather less philosophical) political class, *there* they have (or had) a poet for a president! Or at Nicaragua, whose vice-president is Sergio Ramírez, a novelist!

But in fact the greater deference due certain individual intellectuals in particular countries should not be viewed with unrestrained enthusiasm. In places where ideas are regarded as weapons, those in power typically feel the need for a monopoly of force. This explains why non-Western societies, including societies ruled by poets and novelists, more frequently engage in censorship than those governed by the cultural laity, or why they are more inclined to jail, persecute, or exile their intellectuals. In those countries, an intellectual's youthful militancy often dies in disillusionment and the embrace of actively anti-political attitudes; what begins as commitment ends in withdrawal. Thus, after a lengthy detour, the sacerdotal, non-Western intellectual often ends up as dislocated and powerless as his confrere in the West—but with some additional, quite drastic, personal inconveniences.

This syndrome is in many ways anticipated by the career of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, whose hundredth anniversary has just been observed and who is now the subject of a major intellectual biography by Rockwell Gray.[1] Spain is, evidently, a European country in strictly geographical terms, but as late as the 1920s and 1930s it was regarded by Britain and France as being as backward culturally and socially as many Third World nations today, and many of the issues raised there have a certain contemporary relevance for Africa and Latin America. It was during those very years that Ortega became known in the United States for two books, *Invertebrate Spain* and *The Revolt of the Masses*; both works touched on themes sufficiently broad to attract people not particularly interested in Spain or even in philosophy as such. His later books, which

1 *The Imperative of Modernity: An Intellectual Biography of José Ortega y Gasset*, by Rockwell Gray; University of California Press, 438 pages, $25.

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were written in the 1940s and early 1950s but appeared in this country a decade or more later, *Man and People*, *Man and Crisis*, *History as a System*, *The Dehumanization of Art*, appealed to rather smaller circles—academic philosophers or litterateurs deeply involved in tracing the development of ideas on the Spanish peninsula and in Spanish America.

Gray gives these aspects of Ortega's career all of the attention they deserve (indeed, perhaps a bit more than they deserve), but he also establishes quite firmly his subject's role as an archetype of the involved public intellectual—what Ortega himself called "an aristocrat in the public square." It is this aspect which invites greater analysis and discussion. Above all, Gray's book helps us to place Ortega in the context of Spanish intellectual history—between the generations of 1898 and 1914, between the decline of positivism and the ascendancy of Marxism. He allows us to see Ortega as an exemplar of a kind of liberal conservatism (or conservative liberalism) subsequently superseded by other, less lovely, ideological currents that prevailed in the Spanish civil war (1936-39) and after.

Ortega was born in Madrid in 1883. His father was a prominent journalist; his mother, the daughter of the owner of the great liberal daily *El Imparcial*. After private schooling he entered the University of Madrid, from which he received a doctorate in 1904. He then went to study in Germany—an unusual decision for a Spaniard in those years—eventually settling in Marburg, where he specialized in Kant. Returning to Spain four years later, he received an academic appointment at a teacher-training institute, and in 1910 he won (by competitive examination) the chair of metaphysics at his alma mater.

Between 1911 and 1936 Ortega became one of Spain's truly towering personalities. He contributed regular articles to *El Imparcial* and also to its successor, *El Sol*. He established what later became the Espasa-Calpe publishing house, which made available to Spaniards for the first time accurate, inexpensive paperback translations of the major works of Western European science, philosophy, history, and belles lettres. (The series, incidentally, is still being published.) In 1923 he founded *Revista de Occidente*, Spain's first truly substantial journal of books and ideas, and the following year a publishing house of the same name, to bring out foreign (largely German) philosophical treatises.

But Ortega was something more than merely an intellectual figure—he was also an active, eloquent critic of Spain's corrupt, decrepit political system. During the 1920s the monarchy had undermined much of what remained of its prestige by plunging Spain into an apparently endless colonial war in Morocco; it had discredited the parliamentary system by sponsoring a quasi-dictatorship under General Miguel Primo de Rivera; and it had acted as a brake on needed reforms in education, transport, land tenure, and civil-military relations. Through his newspaper columns Ortega did much to turn the Spanish middle class against the monarchy, and after the abdication of Alfonso XIII in 1931 he was elected to parliament on an independent ticket (rather remarkably labeled "Agrupación de Intelectuales Independientes al Servicio de la Republica").

Ortega's service in the new constituent Cortés was brief and disillusioning; he withdrew from it in 1932 to devote himself to teaching, serious writing, and journalism. An early critic of leftist and anti-clerical excesses which eventually doomed the Republic, he was nonetheless regarded as one of its founders, and therefore anathema to its enemies. Not surprisingly, when the Army of Africa rose up against the authorities in Madrid in the summer of 1936, Ortega was forced to flee for his life. After a brief stay in Paris, he took ship to Buenos Aires (where he lived from 1939 to 1942), subsequently relocating in Estoril, Portugal (1942-48). After 1949 he divided his time between his home in the suburbs of Lisbon and Madrid, where he re-

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established a residence, but the environment (and the attitude of the Franco regime) was such that he never fully re-entered Spanish intellectual life. Instead, he became a kind of ambassador-at-large of European culture, welcome as a supreme adornment to conferences and celebrations almost everywhere except in his own country. By the time he died in 1955, he was regarded as the last paladin of an earlier, golden age of Spanish liberalism, and not without reason. Yet within a decade a new generation of Spanish intellectuals won over to Marxism had relegated him to their dustbin of history—an ironic coda to a career begun and brought to fruition in the service of Enlightenment ideals, and prematurely truncated by the victory of clerico-fascist forces in the Spanish civil war.

As an intellectual biographer, Gray sets for himself the task of elucidating both Ortega's person and his oeuvre—a formidable undertaking for a career which spanned more than fifty years on two continents and involved both prolific public and literary activity. Nonetheless, three major themes emerge quite clearly.

The first is the need for Spain, in Gray's words, to "define itself by standards established beyond its frontiers"—in other words, to submit itself to the norms of Western European culture. In and of itself, the idea was not new: since at least the eighteenth century the Spanish intellectual community had been divided between those who considered the country backward and those who merely regarded its Western neighbors as heretics beyond the pale.

But controversy had become more explicit after defeat in the war with the United States over Cuba and the Philippines in 1898. The "disaster," as it was always called, forced a new generation of writers—Angel Ganivet, Miguel de Unamuno, Azorín—to rethink the comfortable pieties that had sustained their fathers and grandfathers. Eventually the so-called "generation of '98" divided into conservatives and reformers, or perhaps better said, into nationalists and cosmopolites (*hispanizantes* and *europeizantes*)—those who believed that Spain must return to its preternatural essence (whatever that might be), on one hand, and those who, on the other, frankly called for the Spanish people to relinquish, in Gray's phraseology, "their arrogant notion of being the chosen people of the Christian world, and embrace a more distinctly secular view of things."

Broadly speaking, Ortega associated himself with the latter group, and even invented a term—"invertebration"—to describe his country's lack of rigorous social and cultural standards. He was not questioning the value of hierarchy as such, merely the functional utility of Spain's prevailing institutions—Church, throne, army, aristocracy, parasitic political class. The problem, he held, was that the established order, judged against the background of other European countries, simply did not work. His critiques, at times deeply wounding, were difficult to ignore. "The intellectual level is sinking so far and so rapidly at this point in our own decadence," he wrote, for example, just after his return from Marburg, "that shortly there will be neither academies nor theaters; rather, we Spaniards will sit around enormous café tables and tell each other risqué stories."

In both *Invertebrate Spain* and *The Revolt of the Masses*, books which became international best-sellers, Ortega inveighed against the logical product of Spain's dysfunctional system: the "mass man," who refused to accept proper cultural authority and leadership. At times this message was seriously misunderstood, as if it somehow implied an antipathy to democracy, or was embraced by people (including the dictator's son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, later founder of the Falange, Spain's most successful fascist party) with whom Ortega could have had little in common politically. As Gray points out,

> the traditional notion of social classes inherited from 19th century social thought is notably absent from the book [*The Revolt*

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> *of the Masses*], which divided society between cadres of elite leadership and the mass man who rejects them.

It is clear from Ortega's writings that "mass man" was emphatically not a class phenomenon: he could be found at any point on the social scale. Indeed, the central part of Ortega's critique of the Spanish system was that it logically promoted the wrong kind of people. Many of Spain's military, clerical, and political leaders of the Twenties—including, by the way, its aristocracy and high society—were what Ortega had in mind when he spoke of "mass man."

Nonetheless, there was a central tension in Ortega's thought with stark political implications. "Clearly a liberal in his devotion to education and self-realization," Gray writes, Ortega nonetheless

> feared the invasive force of mass taste, which, he believed, threatened to reduce all models of excellence to its own base level. With the *noblesse oblige* of the liberal who is not at heart a democrat, he seemed at once committed to raising men's rights and fearful that success in this effort might ultimately elude him and the elite leadership of which he dreamed.

Ortega's cultural messianism may seem a bit precious for the contemporary reader, but it grew out of an elitism far more disinterested and constructive than the alternative advanced by the Spanish traditionalists of the day—José Calvo Sotelo, José María Pemán, Pedro Saínz Rodríguez, individuals who would emerge as major "cultural" figures of the Franco regime. *Their* source of inspiration was Ramiro de Maeztu (1876-1936), who had long argued (most notably in *Defensa de Hispanidad*) that Spain's decline after 1700 was due to the supposedly rampant invasion of secular humanism and a corresponding decline in militant Catholicism. Ortega's call for higher cultural standards, if under an enlightened leadership class, presupposed important changes in the structure of Spanish society and education—in other words, was fundamentally "liberal" in the context of the time, and understood as such.

The second theme of Gray's book, very much related to the first, is Ortega's insistence on the continuing vitality of European culture. This was a particularly important note to strike in the Twenties, when Spenglerian notions of doom and apocalypse were popular in Germany and France, and some Spanish left-wing intellectuals preferred to find their models in more exotic locales—the Soviet Union, or even the charade of revolutionary Mexico. In contrast, in the pages of *Revista de Occidente* educated Spaniards could find what Gray calls "a kind of cultural topography of Europe," including abundant attention to history and sociological theory, a defense of modern art (though not Surrealism), and an up-to-date summary of the major literary trends in several European languages. (After 1931, Ortega's magazine devoted considerably more attention to specifically Spanish issues.) The depth and strength of Western culture—particularly as manifest in England, France, and pre-Hitlerian Germany—was a theme to which Ortega returned with renewed vigor after the Second World War. By then the notion was gratuitous in the United States or Western Europe, but in Spain itself—locked once again in self-imposed isolation—it had come to be regarded as eccentric when not downright pernicious.

Gray's third theme, which links the other two, concerns the role of the intellectual in society. Like many educated cosmopolites in backward countries, Ortega oscillated on the proper role of persons like himself: at times, he saw them as the proper harbingers of modernization, the natural architects of reform; at other times, he advocated their total withdrawal from the corrupting influences of public life. In any case, Gray writes, Ortega tended "to distrust the partisan blindness occasioned by *engagé* commitments." By the end of his life, in fact, Ortega was openly critical of the cult of "commitment" practiced by certain kinds of

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political intellectuals—particularly Heidegger and Sartre, with many lesser copies to follow. As Gray paraphrases it, "for him, this . . . was the very contradiction of a genuinely philosophical attitude, which consisted in the 'negative capability' *not* to commit oneself, but to remain open to further analysis."

Not surprisingly, then, the heyday of Ortega's role as a public intellectual was the late 1920s—during the last season of the Bourbon monarchy. Once the new republican order was in place, and ideas had to be translated into action, Ortega discovered how ill equipped he was to compete in the public square, particularly with a whole new class of intellectual mediocrities suddenly raised to prominence—men like Mañuel Azaña on the Left, or José María Gil Robles on the Right.

Though elected to parliament for the province of León on a program which advocated, among other things, unionization of workers of both sexes, mild socialization of private capital, and separation of church and state, Ortega quickly found himself outclassed by leftist demagogues within the republican coalition. He correctly foresaw serious problems for institutions founded on fanaticism and revanchism. The anti-clerical provisions of the new republican constitution particularly disturbed him, as did the tendency to look to imported models of revolutionary change or an excessively ideological approach to economic issues. As he told one audience:

> Ladies and gentlemen, I am not a Catholic, and since my youth I have taken care to formalize in a non-Catholic fashion even the humble details of my private life. But I am not about to have imposed on me the wild figureheads of an anarchical anti-clericalism.

A few weeks later he had retired from politics, and the civil war which followed four years later (as well as the victory of the anti-republican coalition) effectively precluded any reconsideration on his part. In Argentina and Portugal he was an outsider subject to the goodwill of local authorities; and though he was permitted (after 1948) to return to Spain, he found it prudent to limit his remarks there to the most abstruse philosophical topics. Long after the final collapse of the Republic, Ortega maintained only the most tentative of truces with the Franco regime—and vice versa. The Falangist press heaped scorn upon even his most innocuous comments in such rare public seminars as he gave during the late Forties. For his part, he refused to accept the state pension due him on his seventieth birthday in 1953. Nonetheless, the regime made a half-hearted attempt to appropriate his memory at the time of his funeral in October 1955, a backhanded admission that this man—whom it had driven into exile and pushed onto the margins of an intellectual life he had once so greatly enriched—had represented the best of the Spain it had extinguished. Ironically, had Ortega remained in Madrid throughout the war, and had the forces of the Republic triumphed, it is just possible that he would have fared no better, and possibly worse.

So much has changed in Spain since the death of Franco in 1975 that it is difficult to place Ortega on the current intellectual scene there. In the fashionable, prevailing circles of the Left, he is regarded as somewhat bourgeois and passé; the Right, now dispersed and demoralized (as much by the consumer revolution as by political change), feels no more affinity with him than it did a generation or two ago. His legacy lives on, somewhat modestly, in the *Revista de Occidente*—both the journal and the publishing house—which his son re-opened in 1963. Overseas, Ortega's influence outlasted him by about twenty years. In Argentina he inspired a whole generation of philosophers and writers who have only recently departed the scene. And in Mexico, a country Ortega never visited, his influence was strongly felt through the pedagogical activities of former students—Spanish republican émigrés who found shelter at the

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Casa de España (later the Colegio de México). Some three million copies of his works have been sold in Spanish, a language in which his prose is regarded—quite rightly—as a model of clarity.

Ortega's life was a long, strenuous exercise in logic, rational discourse, and moderation. His reward—during his lifetime and thereafter—was not great. But one cannot help feeling that the particular position he eventually comes to occupy in the cultural pantheon of Spain and Spanish America will tell us a great deal about the prospects for those countries, whose destinies have been thwarted (or self-thwarted) for so long.

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What is at stake in the "battle of the books"?

by Christopher Ricks

Editor's note: The following paper was given by Christopher Ricks at a symposium organized by the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale University in April on the subject of " 'Moral Education': The Humanities and the Question of Values in Education." The members of the panel were invited to address the question: "What is at stake in the 'Battle of the Books'?" Professor Ricks, who is now on the English faculty of Boston University, is the author of, among much else, books on Milton, Keats, Tennyson, and Eliot. Among the other speakers at the Yale symposium were Martha Nussbaum, Hilton Kramer, James Atlas, Catherine Stimpson, Benjamin Barber, Norman Birnbaum, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

A quarter of an hour, on matters of such moment and such complexity, is not long enough to substantiate an argument but it should permit of relating some convictions. The most that such a relating can hope for is that it manifest a readiness for argument unpursued. But the polemics of travesty may be avoided by proposing not *the* but *an* answer to the question "What is at stake in the battle of the books?" My wish is to identify a prime consideration insufficiently admitted.

What follows is in three parts. First, one person's sense of what is usually and rightly held to be, not at stake exactly, but at issue. Second, my expressing an objection to what is probably the best recent commentary on all this, an objection to the rhetoric in which the argument has been conducted. And third, my questioning not of the rhetoric but of the terms of the argument, to make clear a fundamental reservation about any such solely professional conduct of the debate.

I

But first an acknowledgment of one strong and even perhaps agreed answer to the question of what is at issue. This, which is the link between my three points, is what it has always been: the limited possibility of disinterestedness. "Critics," wrote our greatest critic, "like all the rest of mankind, are very frequently misled by interest." To proceed as if there were every possibility of disinterestedness—despite what power is and always has been—would be to be a sentimental gull. To proceed as if there were no possibility of disinterestedness would be to be a cynical dog. In this, as in so much else, the words of William Empson might carry our conviction: Life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that cannot be solved by analysis.

The particular contradictions have long been known. On the one hand, Dr. Johnson argues cogently in defense of "the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration"; but on the other hand, Johnson's other hand, there is his acknowledgment that "approbation, though long continued, may yet be only the approbation of prejudice or fashion." No one is ever

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going to be absolved from the necessity of distinguishing responsibly between that which is established because it has been found true and that which is found true because it has become established. Injustices have—cannot but have—occluded or excluded certain writers (though not only for reasons of color, gender, or class), but it is true too that there are writers, past and present, who are not "marginalized" but marginal.

For to this ancient siege of contraries there has been added in our day an exacerbated awareness that time, history, and institutions, being powers, have always been open to the abuses of power, and that it will forever suit people of every stripe to claim for what are social arrangements the status of the nature-given or the God-given—or, on the other foot, the guru-given:

> Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night,
> God said "Let Foucault be," and all was
> light.
>
> It could not be—the Devil bawling "Ho,
> Let Lacan be," restored the status quo.

So "relativism" rears its head, at once hydra and chimera. Criticism feels impelled to become meta-criticism, and duly corrugates itself, very like those nineteenth-century agonizers confronting the dreadful possibility that, if God is dead, all is permitted.

"Question authority," says the health-food T-shirt, making an exception of its own authority. "She doubts everything," says Barthes of Kristeva, doubting everything except the desirability of doubting everything. Given the strains, it is not surprising that so much recent criticism has substituted for the stringency of skepticism the complacency of Pyrrhonism.

But an instance of the problem and of a difficulty. There is a crucial variant in the wording of the prefatory note to Mary Douglas's *Rules and Meanings*:

> Each person confronted with a system of ends and means (not necessarily a tidy and coherent system) seems to face the order of nature, objective and independent of human wishes. But the moral order and the knowledge which sustains it are created by social conventions. If their man-made origins were not hidden, they would be stripped of some of their authority.

The last two sentences found themselves quoted on the book's jacket—with one small alteration for drama and sales. "If their man-made origins were not hidden, they would be stripped of much of their authority." But if "some" can be silently upped to "much," why cannot "much" be upped to "all"? What is at stake is both the judgment of authority and the authority of judgment, and to say—*tout court*—that knowledge is created by social conventions is to leave no safeguard against the further escalation, after "some" becomes "much," to this: If their man-made origins were not hidden, they would be stripped of all of their authority.

II

I now take as an authority on these matters not a straw man but a respected figure, from a respected university, writing recently in a respected journal: John Guillory, and his 1987 essay in *ELH* (*English Literary History*) on "Canonical and Non-Canonical: A Critique of the Current Debate." If Guillory is not *representative* exactly, that is mostly because he has taken unusual trouble in the prosecution of these arguments. He is persuasive in his contention that any discussion of "the canon" has to be placed within the largest context, "nothing less than the systematic regulation of reading and writing," and that therefore literacy itself must figure saliently. But I must put an objection to his highly professional essay, to suggest why it and its siblings should be resisted. In a word, its words—and I don't mean jargon but rhetoric, a rhetoric both entirely representative of the professionalized "current debate" and manifesting an insufficient effort at disinterestedness.

For there is a betraying discrepancy be-

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tween the essay's impetus and its rhetoric. Its impetus, explicitly and not unexpectedly, is to repudiate anybody who might find things, in its indispensable word, "unproblematic"; and from its first paragraph on, it endorses the obligatory word "demystifying" and deplores anything "mystified." But the trouble is that this bracing program is everywhere couched in a rhetoric of the massively unproblematic.

Not since Dr. F. R. Leavis (no talk of "problematics" from him) tuned his proems ("It takes no unusual sensitivity to see that . . ." "It would be of no use to try to argue with anyone who contended that . . .")—not since Leavis has a reader been pressed by so ubiquitously indubitable a rhetoric, about as problematic (except morally) as *peine forte et dure*. "It would be pointless to . . ."; "all too easy to demonstrate . . ." (and "only too easy to demonstrate"); "It is certainly the case that . . ."; "It is unquestionably the case that . . ."; "this is certainly the case . . ."; "It would not be difficult to prove that this practice of writing is founded on nothing but . . .": these are not from several books by Leavis but from the one essay by Guillory. "Surely," "doubtless," "no doubt," "undoubtedly," "must certainly," "quite evident" . . . "In fact" must make for good old unproblematics, I'd have thought, and Guillory deploys it all the time (and compounds it: "In fact, as is well known . . ."; "the very fact that . . ."; "This fact is made quite obvious . . ."; "This fact is quite apparent . . ."). And so he does (of course) with "of course," and indeed with "indeed." Whenever the ranks of his argument are about to waver, he rallies them with "only" (not in this usage a word compatible with authentic problematics): "can only be seen through . . ."; "can only be conceived as . . ."; "can only be posed when . . ."; "can only be recovered in relation to . . ."; "Only as such can . . ."; "One need only . . ."; "Only in this way can one explain . . ."; "One had only to place . . ."; "can only be defined . . ."; "It is only to remark the obvious to point out . . . ." And there is the related (and thrice occurring) "nothing other than . . . ." All these, plus the old-fashioned browbeatings: "it would not be inaccurate to say . . ."; "It is important to remember"; "It is worth emphasizing that . . . ." (That's for us to say, as I am often obliged to write in the margins of the young.) So that when in the penultimate sentence of Guillory's essay I twice read the acclamatory noun "problematic," I ask myself whether, even apart from the dubiety of so prostrating oneself before the problematic, there *could* be an incitement to a critique of a genuine "problematic" constituted of such a rhetoric.

Perhaps this would not much matter if the rhetoric were Guillory's own and only his (an *ad hominem* argument, then?); but no, this is the professionally widespread and collusive rhetoric of a hermeneutics of suspicion which never suspects itself of being open to contamination. What is proclaimed as "the delegitimation of the canon" stands in need of a much greater vigilance about the illegitimacies of its own rhetoric. By their rhetoric shall ye know them. The famous composer refuses, for political reasons, the Legion of Honor. "Ah, but all his music accepts it." The authority of the canonical institution may be, as they say, "refused"; ah, but all their rhetoric accepts it. Authoritarianism, shown the door, sidles back in through the window. The enveloping pre-emption is sacrosanct, despite the argument's urgings that nothing be so.

For by now, such a word as "demystification" has become no more exempt from mystificatory manipulation than anything else. So, for instance, Geoffrey Hartman has hearteningly turned to protect the two things closest to his conscience against the very possibility that they might valuably or honorably be demystified. In Wordsworth's great poetry there is "something which cannot be demystified," a "quality . . . which resists overconsciousness and demystification." And in "the memorial books of Polish Jewry" there is not historiography, the fictive, but history, the real. Such *de*-de-

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mystification is to be welcomed, and it will certainly be assisted, at the opposite extreme from Hartman's fastidiousness, by the vulgar success of this exploited and exploitative word, a vacant victory evident in the farcical inertia of phrasing with which *The New York Times* announced last month that the sex-shop at Stanford hopes "to demystify condoms."

III

"The defense of the non-canonical may justly take as its epigraph," Guillory pre-emptively strikingly says, "Walter Benjamin's remark that 'there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'" It would be one sign of disinterestedness if those quoting, yet once more, this remark of Benjamin's would be as attentive to the civilization half of it as to the barbarism half; but no, it is from this wing ideologically correct to invoke barbarism but not to invoke civilization. (Guillory, when he approaches "the 'ideals of Western civilization,'" feels obliged to add "whatever that means.")

Yet even more central professionally than the rhetoric of the critique is the matter of its terms. The profession of the pedagogue is an honorable one, but the honor of any profession consists in its not arrogating to itself more than a profession should claim. In being a profession, it inevitably suffers indurations and partialities. Doctors are not only more but less sensitive to suffering than others; judges, to justice; journalists, to truth; soldiers, to slaughter. A profession ceases to be honorable when it makes too little effort to minimize such losses and, complementarily, when it fails to acknowledge them disinterestedly. Guillory's essay is entirely and explicitly bent upon the classroom, upon pedagogic practice, upon "the whole enunciative apparatus of pedagogy." Nothing intrinsically wrong with that, provided it is imaginatively granted that this is because of pedagogy's intrinsic interests. The word "curriculum" is a faithful flat word: it declares an interest. But "canon" does not. For "canon" claims, with insinuating misrepresentation, the scriptures' especial authority (which yet did not claim a monopoly of worthy books), and moreover "canon" at once makes a more than professional claim and yet is an obdurately professional word. Those outside the profession, with good cause too, do not conceive of books as divided into the "canonical and non-canonical"; and the organic formation which books constitute would be described by them not as a canon but as a literature. See T. S. Eliot's consummate study, "Was There a Scottish Literature?"

Guillory, like the profession generally, now makes much of, and italicizes, the word *exclusion*. If we in turn ask what or who gets excluded, "marginalized," or "disempowered" by the terms of the debate when it is conducted with such solely professional aims, with so narrowed a notion of the disinterested (for professions should acknowledge that they are interested parties), the answer is, first and not surprisingly, all reading other than that conducted under the auspices of pedagogy, and second and no more surprisingly, all *writing* other than that conducted under the auspices of pedagogy. The confidence that there is no reading outside the aegis of the university is misplaced, and it distorts the debate, as if no books were ever—whether justly or unjustly—alive in a literature unless they were part of a curriculum. But the marginalizing of creative writers (or, as they used better to be known, writers) to the point of their exclusion is an even more unworthy hubris of our profession.

Nowhere in such a "critique of the current debate" is any attention paid to the creation or the creators of works of literature. We hear repeatedly and balefully of "a hegemonic tradition," "hegemonic values," "a hegemonic bourgeoisie," "hegemonic paradigms," and "a hegemonic sociolect," but there could not be a more unremitting hegemony than that which is so unmisgivingly circumscribing what is called "the

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production of texts" to something in which writers apparently play no part.

David Bromwich pounced recently on some betraying words in the 1989 ACLS manifesto "Speaking for the Humanities": "Professionalism makes thought possible . . . ." The previous sentence had urged that we "assert the value not just of specialization but of professionalization." But the value of the profession will be in direct proportion to its rising above *folie de grandeur*. The achievements of art put up some valuable resistance to the very words "profession" and "professional"; it is clearer, for instance, that Stephen King is a *professional* writer than that Samuel Beckett is. David Bromwich seems to me to despair too promptly, and even too lightheartedly, when he says that "like any other faith, professionalism cannot be argued with." I believe that all faiths can and should be argued with; the chances of persuading are not high, but nowhere else are they so either. Giving reasons for the faith that is in one: such was Hazlitt's unprofessionalized conviction.

No one is going to deny that a great many books live, come back to life, and are imaginatively attended to because of their presence in curricula. But the most important and enduring rediscovery or reinvention of a book or of a writer comes when a subsequent creator is inspired by it to an otherwise inexplicable newness of creative apprehension. John Skelton became again a living presence as a poet not because professors and professionals decided that he had been "marginalized" but because Robert Graves and W. H. Auden showed, in very different ways, what possibilities of new life there were in the old dog yet. The poignant beauty of William Barnes would be unattended to were it not for more than the praises, the creations, of Hardy and Larkin, and Meredith's *Modern Love* if it were not for what Robert Lowell did with and for its mastery of marital misery in his sonnet sequence *The Dolphin*. Ivy Compton-Burnett essentially did more even for so acknowledged a writer as Jane Austen than even Mary Lascelles did.

Such new creation does not lend itself to an attempt such as Guillory's "to theorize in a new way the question of the canon," but it raises a question of principle, and one which is professionally urgent: that an honorable profession be one which does not vaunt. The crucial constituting of what is tendentiously called the canon is effected not by academics and critics but by creative writers (the obscuring of the distinction having therefore been for some time a professional or trade-union necessity for professors), and the crux is the conviction that works of literature most live, not in the formation of the cunning canon or the candid curriculum, but in their fecundating of later works of literature.

But getting recognition for this truth will not be easy, especially at a time when the profession understandably closes ranks against its external enemies. Hubris harmonizes with whistling to keep our courage up. It is a pity that Harold Bloom, who genuinely loves literature, has countenanced for his latest book this professional aggrandizement: "Self-styled the 'Yiddisher Doctor Johnson,' [Bloom's] productivity rivals that of the good doctor" (the good doctor, smiled down upon, like the "little man" who reads the electricity meter)—but "Bloom, unlike Johnson, needs no Boswell." The author of "The Vanity of Human Wishes" and *Rasselas* did not *need* Boswell. But this is the pass to which things have come, the insecure overclaim of a profession which feels itself, and is in some ways, undervalued. The most signal thing about the fourteen of us speaking on the humanities here today is this: that because of the misguided assumption that a professional occasion should be peopled exclusively by professionals, not one of us is a writer, an artist.

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Poems *by C. H. Sisson, Robley Wilson, Jr., Prescott Evarts, Jr. & Barbara Jordan*

In the apple-tree

The mistletoe is back
Among the knitted twigs
Of the old apple tree.
And what is that to me?
My pruning hand still digs
And the old branches crack.

But where the bunch first grew
Is a great skeleton,
The berries and the leaves
For which my heart still grieves,
All, all are gone;
And so I love the new.

How rare now that I can
See new replace the old,
As, on the neighbouring bough
I see it now!
The pleasure must be told,
And I am still a man.

—C. H. Sisson

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Persia

To dance, she has tied my scarf
low around her hips. The room
is dimly lighted, and the colors
dyed into the silk shine violet,
ochre, alizarin. *This is the way*
the Persian women used to dance,
she says, *before the revolution*
and the Shah's exile. I ask her
why she goes on saying 'Persia'
instead of 'Iran.' *Need you ask?*
she says. *'Persia' is romantic.*
'Iran' is politics. She sways
in the shadows, putting herself
between me and the gold lamplight,
so that I think I can feel my eyes,
the pupils, growing and shrinking
as if in time to an imagined music.
I was only a visitor, a tourist.
I could never have lived there,
no matter who ruled. Such quaint
superstitions. The young women
write prayers inside their thighs,
high up; they think the prayers
will capture the man they love.
They cover their heads because
they have been warned each hair
exposed will turn into a snake.
No divorce. Can you picture it?
Me with three husbands scattered
in my wake? And then I ask her:
what if she had to stay in Persia?
I'd be revolutionary, bare my head
so that every hair would change
into a serpent, and the serpents
envenom all of the wicked men
of my past until I was set free
forever. And would she then

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love me? *No. With all the energy*
I saved by becoming celibate
I would invent you a new universe
in which gender means nothing.
She stops, unties the scarf, loops
it playfully around my shoulders.
No more dance of love, she says.
We'll stay the dearest of friends.
Of course I agree, but in my head
she is still that Persian woman
dancing, and I am a shy audience
hidden as in *The Arabian Nights,*
who admires and burns and wonders:
in the prayer she has scrawled
between her thighs, whose name
shall I read? Whose lucky name?

—*Robley Wilson, Jr.*

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Cheetah

At night I often find
a cheetah running hard
to the left and to the right
in a dusty Kenyan park,

its muscles held in harness,
slowed down and juxtaposed
against the antelope
that leap away in fear.

Their patterns interweave
and hardly touch the plain
like waves of light that flow
across the grass of stars.

—Prescott Evarts, Jr.

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To England

A world was lined in velvet. Its garden pillars
like huge chrysalides
trailed off into the unkempt
woods of fox dens and tungsten skies,
and its emblems—honeybees sealed in glass
and pronged into rings,
halls of padded rodents and hummingbirds—
made nature less a precipice,
her exits and entrances as lifesize as a wish.

Kingdom of backyard naturalists,
cartographer of sacred stones,
Once, your aristocracy had a periscope in every
chimney,
and wore, to hunt, the Order of the Stoat on
their lapels;
Thumbelina floated in a walnut shell,
and dioramas of The Great Fire and Waterloo
preserved, like a plague arm in formaldehyde.

—Barbara Jordan

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Music

Reflections on Bach

by Samuel Lipman

Has so apparently unexceptional an act as playing Bach in a more or less traditional way now taken on an exceptional, indeed an oppositional, character? Of course, Bach is now played everywhere; along with Mozart and Beethoven, his music attracts both audiences and critics. And yet there is hardly any music today that is approached by the most talented performers with greater trepidation and anxiety. I have become more aware than ever of this curious phenomenon in the course of my work as artistic director of the Waterloo Music Festival in New Jersey, where for the past three summers we have begun each of our chamber music concerts with glorious but little performed music by Bach. In my concert program notes this past summer, I attempted to discuss the situation in contemporary Bach performance. What follows is drawn from these notes.

I

In 1989, Johann Sebastian Bach once again began each of Waterloo's six chamber music concerts. In 1987 and 1988, we had traversed the entire *Art of Fugue*, performing this profound and fascinating collection of contrapuntal ingenuities in a variety of instrumental combinations, ranging from strings, winds, and brass to two pianos and even percussion. This past summer we shifted our attention to the no less significant *Musical Offering*, a group of thirteen individually perfect works based on a theme given to Bach in 1747 for improvisation by that accomplished musical amateur, Frederick the Great of Prussia.

Several of the mostly short components of the *Musical Offering* were written to be performed on the keyboard, and others were written to be performed by instrumental ensembles. The keyboard Bach had in mind for the opening *Ricercar à 3* was either a harpsichord or an early version of the fortepiano, which some years in the future was to replace the harpsichord and which in its turn was to be replaced by the modern iron-framed piano. In this summer's opening concert we heard this work twice, first on a double-manual harpsichord and then, in a bow to the instrument whose triumph in the nineteenth century made possible the growth of a discerning mass audience for classical music, on a nine-foot Steinway concert grand. In the ensuing four concerts, we heard the various canons of the *Musical Offering*, as well as the four-movement Trio Sonata, in instrumentation suggested either by Bach or by recent performing editions. Finally, in our last concert, we heard the closing *Ricercar à 6* in a transcription for small orchestra by Gerard Schwarz, Waterloo's principal conductor.

Save for the harpsichord version of the *Ricercar à 3*, all our performances were on modern instruments. Some may feel that this attitude toward performance forces displays a lack of respect toward the composer's

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intentions, as divined by modern scholarship. One critic even called it "bizarre." I think, however, that Bach's music, because it is so beautiful, and because it has so much to teach, and because it is, in a word, so *universal*, must be performed by as wide a range of players as possible.

II

In the almost two hundred and fifty years since his death in 1750, Bach has provided sustenance for the players of every instrument and every combination of instruments. As new instruments were called into being in the last century by the explosive growth in the concert music repertory, it seemed ever more natural to perform Bach in whatever medium came to hand. The nineteenth century, after all, was the age of the instrumental transcription; no instrument profited more from the availability of Bach than the piano, that omnipresent successor to the clavichord, the harpsichord, and the organ, and replacement for the orchestra and the voice. But as the twentieth century followed, we entered a proud age of academic specialization. Now, as the demand for intellectual purity is taken for granted, Bach performance has become the property of a self-appointed and self-perpetuating guild.

Like every guild before it, the doughty band devoted to the so-called authentic performance of old music on original instruments, or copies of them, combines the codification of rigorous internal standards with the proclamation of an elaborate rationale designed to exclude interlopers and dilettantes. The interlopers and dilettantes, it is hardly necessary to add, are those who choose *not* to play Bach in the approved authentic style on the approved original instruments.

For musicians and audiences alike, the result of the new performance-oriented musicology is the restriction of Bach playing to relatively few musicians, and those few are usually neither technically nor artistically of the first rank. As one conductor recently remarked: "Musicology provides players with an excuse for playing out of tune." And, I might add, an excuse to play in a monotonous, jerky, and unnatural rhythm as well. Unfortunate as this situation is for an audience thus deprived of communicative performances of Bach's masterpieces, it is even worse for executant musicians who address themselves to a mainstream, mostly nineteenth-century, repertory. Bullied by scholars and derided by critics, they no longer learn and perform Bach, a literature that contains within itself, as a drop of water contains the ocean, all our music.

III

It is difficult not to feel these days that Bach is as much a great scholarly industry as he is a great composer. Thoroughly vetted and "definitive" textual recensions, abstruse accounts of the master's compositional procedures, manuals detailing exactly how his music is to be realized in an authentically free manner—all of this, taken together, supposedly amounts to a great deal about what we hope is the real Bach.

Along with this explosion, there is another—in Bach performance. The Bach guild prospers: recording companies market "complete Bach editions," and artists make careers programming—and recording—an amount of Bach's music so great that one wonders how they can comprehend even a small number of the notes they perform. And so the Bach sound flows on, a seamless tapestry—or is it an engulfing ocean?—of music.

Yet performers know in their hearts that there is hardly any music in the repertory so difficult as that of Bach. Hardly any music is so difficult to penetrate in spirit and meaning. For the simple fact is that Bach is always infinitely varied in local pattern and large-scale design. No two pieces, no two passages, no two instants in Bach are ever in any important way alike; no two counterpoints, no two melodies, no two transitions are ever quite the same. Though it can hardly be literally true, it seems as if no chord ever

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leads harmonically to its successors in quite the same way.

To this endless compositional variability in Bach is added a refinement and subtlety of expression so great as to reveal new depth each time a performer opens the pages of a given piece. In every performer's heart is graven the awareness (and perhaps the fear) that a lifetime of study is not enough to plumb the depths of even a short piece by Bach. Perhaps this sad but strangely uplifting fact should be remembered every time we are told that a Bach recording is "complete" or "definitive."

IV

Bach was once the recipient of an ambivalent tribute from John Cage, the American avant-garde composer, mycologist, and prankster. Sometime in the 1960s, I heard him remark in a broadcast lecture, apropos of what I no longer remember, "Bach did the right thing with counterpoint: he taught it." Whimsical though Cage's *aperçu* may have been, he struck at a profound, albeit obvious, truth: Bach is the great teacher of our musical tradition.

But to demean Bach's educational value by making of him no more than a musty theory teacher is to trivialize a great master. What Bach teaches us is the primacy of the musical material, the value of each note and each combination of notes, of each melodic line and each combination of melodic lines. The beauty of Bach inheres as much in the parts as in the whole. Every separate line possesses its own interest, vitality, and autonomy; every moment is capable of standing alone before music's and Bach's God. Thus what we learn from Bach is that every note, every player, every musical thought counts.

V

Aside from the overall incommensurability of Bach's art, there are many specific problems in performing his music. Chief among these problems is that of sentiment—the role of what used to be called "feeling" in communicating the true essence of the music. Our age, though it rewards maudlin sentimentality in its entertainment culture, increasingly seems to find in scholarship the only allowable point of entry into the great art of the past. Unabashed sentiment, a manifest indulgence in beauty, is seen as the disfiguring of pure texts.

Matters were otherwise in the nineteenth century. Hallowed masterpieces in painting, literature, and music were perceived as glorious vessels fit to contain the most typical and extravagant contemporary emotions. Thus Liszt could write his *Sposalizio*, a sensuous and extroverted piano piece inspired by Raphael's painting of the marriage of the Virgin; the great Oxford teacher Benjamin Jowett could find in Plato an exemplar of high Victorian values; Bach's choral works could be performed not by the small choruses natural to the composer's small-scale world but by the growing hordes characteristic of post-1789 bourgeois society.

What we see now in Bach is his infinity of notes, not his infinity of thoughts. Accordingly, our modern taste in Bach performance is for the mechanical and antiseptic, not the eloquent and grand. Does this mean that, just as the romantic era accommodated Bach to its own age of florid expression, we are accommodating Bach to our own age of the typewriter and computer?

VI

It is perhaps curious that a position such as mine, so friendly in general to performances of Bach on modern instruments, nonetheless finds it difficult to countenance—perhaps stomach is a better word—renditions of Bach on keyboard synthesizers, in the fashion of Wendy Carlos and Tomita. After all, if what Bach wrote is wonderful on the Steinway piano, that marvel of nineteenth-century metallurgy and acoustical research, why should not it be wonderful on the Moog or the Yamaha synthesizers, those marvels of late twentieth-century electronics? Once the

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purity of the original sound has been violated, as the very passage of time makes inevitable, what is to be said against the latest fashion in performance replacing the one before?

It will doubtless be said that much of the resistance to electronic Bach is pure snobbery, like fish forks at fancy dinners. Electronics, so the argument against this supposedly snobbish disdain would go, is both for the masses and of the masses; it is cheap, widely available, endlessly duplicable, and exactly obedient to the will of the artist. And so what began (in the case of Bach) with the harpsichord in the palaces of the aristocracy and expanded with the piano into the living rooms of the middle class ends today with CD and cassette players on jogging paths and car speakers. Is there anything inherently wrong with this progression?

Although there is much to be said about the benefits of elite culture remaining the preserve of a self-selecting and self-sacrificing elite, the crucial issue regarding the electronic performance of Bach is not one of Veblenite sociology but one of music and art, and therefore of civilization. The contribution of electricity to music-making, it should be emphasized, is simply not continuous with the nineteenth-century improvement of instruments. Regardless of how much louder a piano is than a harpsichord, or how much easier and more reliable a valved horn is than a natural horn, the nexus linking physical effort and artistic result remained the same: what the player put in, the listener got out. Similarly, in the case of music composition, notes had to be written down, with all the frightful physical and mental labor such inscription involves.

With the coming of electricity this nexus was decisively broken. The first break came in the 1920s with the microphone, wireless broadcasting, and the electrical recording process: for the first time in the history of music what had been originally played soft could be heard loud. With the coming of recording on magnetic tape in the 1940s, errors could be snipped out, leaving a seamlessly correct result. And yet, despite the decisiveness of the change brought by early electronics, something of the old order remained: at least what sounded on recordings or the radio like playing and singing had to be somewhere, somehow, played or sung.

After the arrival of electronic keyboards and sine-wave generators in the 1950s, the working musician, as traditionally understood, became irrelevant to the making of what was now to pass in academic laboratories for music. Failed scientists with a smattering of music, and failed musicians with a smattering of science, decided that composition was a matter of ideas, not talent. And yet, despite all the equipment and all the critical acclaim, the new music made by electronic means has vanished without a trace.

But the illusion that electronics provided—of a music-making no longer bound by physical limitations on endurance, accuracy, and strength—has remained, and has inevitably invaded the realm of Bach performance. Because music gains its greatness from the musician's battle to tame and transcend his body, Bach when plugged in is nothing more than a feelingless robot, a mechanical trick calculated to deceive the innocent. Because Bach wrote so many notes, and because his many notes are so difficult to penetrate, he has been a prime candidate for this rootless brand of performance. It is in synthesized Bach that we hear the death rattle of sublime genius reduced to the level of wallpaper. Emptied of meaning and purged by quack science of humanity and divinity alike, electric Bach is fast, loud, cold, and square. It lacks even the devil's power to shock.

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Art behind barbed wire

by Dana Mack

A Nazi concentration camp is perhaps the last place in the world where one would expect to find conditions favorable to the creation of art. And yet, in 1944, art did come from one such camp—a musical work of sufficient interest for it to be performed today, if only sporadically. The work is Viktor Ullmann's satirical opera *Der Tod dankt ab, oder Der Kaiser von Atlantis* ("Death Abdicates, or the Emperor of Atlantis"). The manuscript of the opera was discovered in 1972 by the British composer Kerry Woodward, who conducted its premiere three years later. A much-touted revival of the work took place in May at the Wiener Kammeroper (the Vienna Chamber Opera).

The Emperor of Atlantis was composed (although never performed) at Theresienstadt, the "showcase" concentration camp forty miles northeast of Prague where large numbers of prominent Jewish artists and intellectuals were interned on their way to the Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen gas chambers. Conditions at Theresienstadt, while appalling enough, were far better than in the death camps. The inmates were permitted books, musical instruments, and amusements. Indeed, the camp's so-called *Freizeitgestaltung* ("recreational activity"), which began spontaneously with the smuggling of musical instruments into the ghetto, soon blossomed into a full-fledged cultural life. Theater, cabaret, concerts, opera—all were undertaken with the blessing of the SS, presumably in the hope of maintaining a compliant prisoner population and for the purposes of presenting to the world a "humane" camp that would conceal the real horror of Hitler's Reich.

Viktor Ullmann could be said to epitomize Theresienstadt's inmates, most of whom were prominent Jews with distinguished military records. Ullmann himself was the son of a Jewish nobleman and army officer; he had been the youngest officer in the Austro-Hungarian forces during the First World War. Joza Karas tells us in *Music in Terezín*,[1] his authoritative history of musical life in the camp, that Ullmann's early musical career had been assisted by his former teacher, Arnold Schoenberg, who recommended the young man for a position as Alexander Zemlinsky's assistant at the German Opera in Prague. Throughout the interwar period Ullmann worked in music—as a conductor, teacher, and music critic—but produced little in the way of composition, even after resuming his studies, this time with the experimental Czech composer Alois Hábas. Apparently Ullmann's compositional efforts were restricted by constant financial pressures. During his internment at Theresienstadt, however, Ullmann became prolific. In two years he produced at least sixteen compositions, among them several song cycles, a string quartet, three piano sonatas, and *The Emperor of Atlantis*. Many

1 *Music in Terezín* (Terezín is Czech for Theresienstadt) was published by Beaufort Books in 1985.

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of these works were first performed in the camp.

That the prisoners at Theresienstadt were receptive to such high-minded cultural efforts can be inferred from their portrayal in the Nazi film *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* ("The Führer Donates a City to the Jews"), even after allowing for the films's propaganda purposes. Half starved and crowded into barracks, Jewish prisoners are observed pursuing their pastimes: reading, knitting, listening to orchestral concerts . . . noble occupations in ignoble circumstances.

The recent Vienna production of *The Emperor of Atlantis* began with excerpts from this very film. When they ended and the music began, the stage brightened and one could make out a large construction resembling a cage. It was within this cage, apparently, that the opera was to be performed. The parallel to real life seemed clear enough—until the singers entered, drifting in confusion like somnambulists. Because these catatonic wanderers were dressed in concentration-camp garb, and positioned literally behind bars, we were presumably meant to identify them with the men and women we had just seen on screen. But in the faces of the screen figures one could see the light of reason still shining through a veil of human suffering; the stage figures, by contrast, seemed demoralized, alienated. Indeed, they suggested so fully the familiar posturing of postmodern melodrama that one could not help feeling a certain lack of sympathy for them.

Fortunately, one was soon informed via a narrator that the *dramatis personae* wandering across the stage were not literally the hopeless victims of oppression we had in mind. Rather, they were archetypal figures, poised, as it turned out, to take part in a surreal satire of some dramatic force. The cast included, besides the narrator, an Emperor, a Pierrot, a drummer, an ordinary soldier, and a maiden. Among these hapless ideal types stalks the figure of Death.

As the story unfolds, we learn that Death is feeling insulted by the mechanization of war and the bloodbaths of the warmongering Emperor. In retaliation, he decides to "abdicate"—that is, he refuses to perform his customary task of grim reaping. This strange development turns the war machine on its head. Men and women of enemy camps stop fighting and start falling in love. Hospitals overflow with the sick and wounded, for whom there is now no deliverance from pain. Overworked doctors rise up in rebellion. The Emperor is especially annoyed when people he has sentenced to death refuse to die. Faced with a revolution, he finds that only by offering his own life can he force Death to return to work.

There is obviously an absurd aspect to all of this, with the black humor we expect from absurdist theater. When one considers where *The Emperor of Atlantis* was composed, one can hardly wonder at its theme of death as redeemer. But there is more to the libretto than satire edged with despair. The Emperor is an appropriately monstrous figure—infantile and arrogant; at the same time, he is strangely poignant. Indeed, one curiosity of the opera is the extent to which he solicits our sympathy:

> *Death*: I will be reconciled if you will make the sacrifice of being the first to die.
>
> *Emperor*: I would have the strength to make this sacrifice, but humanity does not deserve it.
>
> *Death*: Then I cannot return to you.
>
> *Emperor*: Shall I refuse myself that experience for which all sufferers beg? . . . Oh, if only my work had succeeded. Were the land freed from the yoke of men, it would stretch out its unmowed fields. Ah, were we but extinct! The forests that we cut would grow freely, no one to tap the stream of water from running its way . . . .

Here, as elsewhere in the libretto, one has a sense of metaphysical grappling with the human urge to destroy. There is even a sense

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of tragedy. We see a pathetic fall from power as the monstrous Emperor—a man whose nihilistic visions cannot be realized—is forced to become his own victim. A comparison with the Emperor's real-life analogue, Adolf Hitler, who committed suicide on learning of the failure of his destructive plans, is hardly inappropriate.

The librettist for Ullmann's opera was Peter Kien, a gifted fellow inmate. Kien was only twenty-two years old when he was incarcerated at Theresienstadt. He had studied visual arts at the Academy in Prague, and was an accomplished caricaturist. Oddly enough, his portraits of well-known Theresienstadt prisoners have a kind of warmth that is missing in the libretto, which is often stiff and emotionally reserved.

At times, Kien expresses his cold irony with a distressing lack of subtlety, as in these words from Pierrot.

> What do we want to drink?
> We want to drink blood now.
> What do we want to kiss now?
> The devil's behind.

Even so, there is much in the libretto that is worthwhile. It is difficult to ignore, for example, such nightmarish images as the following—a take-off on the famous German lullaby that begins "Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf,/Der Vater hüt' die Schaf" ("Sleep, child, sleep,/God protects his sheep"):

> Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf,
> ich bin ein Epitaph.
> Dein Vater ging im Krieg zu Grund,
> dein' Mutter frass ihr roter Mund.
>
> (Sleep, child, sleep,
> I am an epitaph.
> Your father fell in the war,
> Your mother bit her lips.)

Kien worked in the camp administration, and must have seen a trainload of children on their way to Auschwitz. In fact, he typed his libretto on the back of documentation forms that had been laid aside following the deportation of some prisoners to death camps. It is worth mentioning that Kien voluntarily joined his parents in a transport to Auschwitz, an act of such consummate heroism that it would dwarf even the greatest literary accomplishment.

Ullmann's setting of Kien's poetry is an interesting combination of stylistic adaptations. Military and political anthems, jazz, and baroque music provide the basic idioms, which he thickens with polytonal dissonance. An unconventional orchestration, including saxophone, banjo, and harpsichord, helps to create an atmosphere of unsentimental, audience-pleasing parody. But the quality is very uneven. For example, the soaring lyricism of an aria in the third scene—on the words "Ist's wahr dass es Landschaften gibt die nicht von Granattrichtern öd sind?" ("Is it true that there are landscapes the cannons have not decimated?")—is offset by the banal march tunes that pervade the scenes around it. In short, there is some lovely music in the opera; but it is overwhelmed by much that seems contrived and uninspired.

Of course the struggle against time may well have been a factor in the music's inconsistency. Certainly *ad hoc* changes were made, and the opera had barely gone into rehearsals when Ullmann, Kien, and most of the cast were deported to their deaths.[2]

There is always the risk that the political-historical concerns of a work like *The Emperor of Atlantis*, as important as they are, will obscure our view of it as a work of art. Politics can take over, determining not only *whether* such a work is performed but *how* it is performed, and even, unless we are careful, what our critical response will be.

The Vienna production of *The Emperor of Atlantis* was a case in point. It was expressly undertaken within the scope of commemorations of the Anschluss and Kristallnacht, and it was directed by George Tabori, a well-

2 There seems to have been one survivor. He was Karel Berman, assigned the role of Death. He was later a member of the Prague National Theater.

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known *enfant terrible* of German theater. Tabori is a Hungarian refugee from Nazi persecution, a playwright, a director, a connoisseur of modern theater from Strindberg to Beckett, and a former collaborator of Brecht's. No doubt he was attracted to the satirical, Brechtian aspects of *The Emperor of Atlantis*.

And yet in Tabori's hands Ullmann's opera becomes the victim of political overkill. Where economy and lightness of touch would heighten the work's effectiveness, Tabori stages it heavy-handedly, behind bars. He discourages any dynamic contrast, both dramatically and musically: everything is loud and overplayed. He encourages the most exaggerated antics from characters who are already archetypes. Most disturbing is his decision to ignore the stage directions which accompany the opera's best moment: the Emperor's sacrifice. The librettist stipulates that Death lead the Emperor offstage through a mirror. In a vulgar and baffling interpolation, Tabori has Death receive the Emperor's sacrifice by removing the latter's dirty socks and kissing them.

It is possible that by heaping the stage floor with dirt, as Tabori does, he is taking advantage of this production to rub the noses of his German-speaking audience in the filth of their past, and that by insisting on the excessive barking of his narrator he hopes to assail their ears with the same cacophony to which the Germans subjected the people they oppressed. Such an approach, it bears repeating, does no service to Ullmann's modest pastiche.

But there is a certain logic to it. As the director of an experimental theater in Vienna, Tabori cannot but be aware of the recent alarming rise of anti-Semitism in Austria. Like any Jewish cultural figure active in German-speaking lands today, he is up against a lot: namely, a peculiar combination of open political hostility and patronizing attempts at reconciliation. Indeed, the disturbing legacy of Austria's Nazi past has recently been highly visible. Culturally, the commemorative years 1988 and 1989 have occasioned a thorough excavation of the Jewish cultural contribution between the wars. In Vienna, the commemorations have been marked by such special musical events as an Austrian radio concert entitled "Banished Music." Austria is not alone in sponsoring cultural festivities that segregate Jewish work for purposes of rehabilitation. The Wiener Kammeroper took its production of Ullmann's work to Berlin as part of that city's commemorative music festival, called "Music Out of Exile."

Unfortunately, the tendency of the Austrian government to compensate for the recent Waldheim embarrassment by means of an increased attention to Jewish artists has only aggravated anti-Jewish feeling. Certainly it has not altered the country's basic political attitudes. Rather, it has tended to emphasize the Austrians' dependence upon the role of Jews in high culture, a role that is, as one might expect, resented. It is relevant to recall, in this context, Rolf Liebermann's recent shocking statement on German television that he was "chased out" of the Salzburg Mozarteum (where he was director) by anti-Semites.

This is the cultural atmosphere in which *The Emperor of Atlantis* was revived. While we can be grateful for the chance to hear the work, we can wonder whether it was best to hear it as part of a category of music that has been singled out for special attention, mostly for the purpose of assuaging guilt. Certainly the music of Schoenberg or Zemlinsky will not go down in history as "banished music" but rather as fine music temporarily subjected to political persecution.

And what of *The Emperor of Atlantis*? On strictly artistic terms, does it deserve a permanent place in the repertory? Alas, the answer to that question is probably "no." As engaging as the work can be at times, and as compelling as its subject undoubtedly is, Ullmann's opera would seem to fail the test of the strictest criteria. Such a judgment does not rule out the value of occasional revivals, of course. But when it comes to art, posterity is properly more concerned with aesthetic achievement than with the conditions that gave rise to it, however tragic they may be.

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Art

Goya: Enlightenment at the Met

by Karen Wilkin

The not quite wholly satisfying major exhibition is, alas, becoming a New York standard. Long awaited shows such as last year's Braque retrospective at the Guggenheim, "Courbet Revisited" at the Brooklyn Museum, or this summer's survey of Helen Frankenthaler's paintings at the Museum of Modern Art have turned out to be slightly less marvelous than hoped. "It's not the show of your dreams," I heard myself saying each time, "but you mustn't miss it. There are enough really wonderful pictures to make it worth seeing even if it could have been better."

Not that the subjects of these shows seemed less good than we thought they were. Quite the contrary. The high level of the best Braques or Courbets or Frankenthalers simply made you wish that the shows had been more comprehensive or better chosen. It's always exhilarating to see a large number of works by a first-rate artist, no matter what the context, so I suppose we should be grateful for the opportunity, given the amount of dreary stuff that all too often fills museums these days. But the realities of the museum world being what they are, these not quite ideal exhibitions will stand as definitive for a long time to come and that is the sad part. It would be refreshing if excellence were more frequently the chief criterion for selection rather than historical significance, relation to a theme, context, or typicalness. There's no need to choose between quality and the scope of a show: witness the excellent and revealing surveys of Matisse's years in Nice and Cézanne's first decade of painting, both seen at the National Gallery. It may be significant that neither show came to New York.

"Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment," organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Museo del Prado, Madrid, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, unfortunately was a paradigm of the phenomenon—an eagerly anticipated exhibition that seemed something of a missed opportunity, for all the pleasure it afforded.[1] I should not have been surprised, since the title stated, without dissembling, that the focus would be not on Goya's art but on Goya's art filtered through a particular thesis, in a particular context. Such a specific point of view can be illuminating (I almost wrote "enlightening"). It can help to make the work of a well-known artist fresh; and Goya, a protean artist, hard to pin down, is surely a prime candidate for re-evaluation. Discussed variously as a romantic, proto-Surrealist, realist, and social satirist, he could prove to have been an eighteenth-century rationalist as well. Clearly, as any

1 "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment" was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from May 4 to July 16, having previously been on view at the Museo del Prado in Madrid and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The exhibition was co-directed by Eleanor A. Sayre of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez of the Prado.

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visitor to the Prado could attest, there is more to be examined in his work than those two paintings of the Duchess of Alba, with and without clothes.

My lingering optimism was dispelled by the text panels and the first exhibit in "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment," at least in the Metropolitan's installation. We were informed that Goya's art developed not in isolation but "from a dialogue with the ideas of the Spanish Enlightenment," defined as "the eighteenth century *trend* of rationalist, liberal, humanitarian, and scientific thought" (italics mine) "and the Liberalism that grew from it." The show would examine the connection between Goya's art and the literature and philosophy of his time. We were greeted by a pedestrian portrait, not by Goya but by the court painter Anton Raphael Mengs, of Carlos III, "the king who best embodied the Spanish Enlightenment," according to the catalogue entry.[2] The rest of the paintings and prints were by Goya, but they appeared to have been chosen principally as illustrations of the exhibition's thesis. Portraits, for example, tended to be of individuals who "embodied the Spanish Enlightenment," which did not necessarily mean they were Goya's best portraits or his most inventive.

Securing loans of works by a master of Goya's stature and vintage can be immensely difficult, so the pressures of the show's theme may not have solely determined the choice of works on display, but whatever the reasons, the result was a skewed vision of Goya's achievement and, oddly, given the exhibition's avowed intentions, an equally skewed vision of his relation to Spanish society at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

The exhibition's conception of Goya as a liberal, a sophisticated participant in the Enlightenment, is difficult to sustain. In fact, the catalogue's introductory essay, by Alfonso E. Pérez Sénchez of the Prado and co-director of the exhibition, is a reasonable, balanced, and informative discussion of the pitfalls of such an assumption, in light of what is known about Goya.

Born in Aragon in 1746, the son of a master gilder, Goya seems to have courted the aristocracy most of his life. He knew many of the "ilustrados," the "enlightened ones," and painted their portraits, but what remains of his correspondence (which has very possibly been severely edited by nervous heirs) does not suggest that Goya took an active part in the intellectual life of eighteenth-century Spain. He was employed by the monarchy most of his life, though it took him some time and considerable effort to get there. Commissions from the royal family came while he was in his early thirties, but he wasn't appointed court painter until he was forty. Then he wrote exultantly to a friend: "The king and queen are crazy about yours truly." The king he served, however, was not Carlos III, who "best embodied the Spanish Enlightenment," but his feckless successor, Carlos IV. Goya received official support for his paintings of Spanish resistance to Napoleon, and managed to survive the palace purge that followed the restoration of the Spanish monarchy in 1814, retaining his position as court painter under the reactionary Fernando VII—admittedly a matter of survival rather than an indication of a lapse of conscience. The worst excesses of Fernando, ten years later, convinced Goya, then nearly eighty, to emigrate to France, where he died in 1828.

Not that this means all that much. The complexity of Spanish politics of the period created extraordinary, apparently contradictory positions: progressive thinkers who supported a constitution backed by the hereditary monarchy in opposition to Napoleon, and so on. But the selection of works in "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment" obviously emphasized some aspects of his production and minimized others. Since a single picture often stood for a large number of its type, our sense of Goya's

2 The exhibition catalogue, *Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*, has as its principal authors Eleanor A. Sayre and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez and is published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (407 pages, $65 hardcover, $35 paperback).

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preoccupations and evolution was distorted. He painted, for example, far more frivolous, elegantly dressed, upper-class women than the Met's exhibition suggested and painted the unlovely Carlos IV, his wife María Luisa, and their family more often; there were more portraits of cosseted children, more important (possibly untransportable) works for the Church than the exhibition indicated; there were, too, a great many more paintings of peasant life, chiefly designs for tapestries to decorate the rooms of royal palaces, not celebrations of oppressed humanity. It's characteristic of the exhibition's bias that the few tapestry cartoons selected from the roomfuls at the Prado were principally of somber motifs—peasants in winter and a wounded mason carried by fellow workers—instead of the more typical pastoral themes of the majority. The catalogue texts stress the importance of Goya's having painted the brutish reality of peasant life (rather a divergent attitude from the French Enlightenment's idealization of the masses, I should think), while *The Wounded Mason* (1786-87, Museo del Prado) is said to have been inspired by new safety and compensation regulations, an illustration that "Goya was not indifferent to the endeavors of the enlightened to reform society."

If the "public" Goya was less than adequately represented, the private one was better served, thanks to the informal portraits of his friends, included in the exhibition because of their associations with its theme, and a selection of self-portraits that ranged from the small, delightful figure of Goya dressed as a tough, working in a hat with candles around the brim (about 1790-95, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid), to the poignant image of the painter in extremis, supported by his physician in a kind of updated Pietà (1820, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts).

Perhaps the most intimate aspect of Goya's work, the astonishing prints—the *Disparates,* the *Caprichos,* the *Disasters of War*—were brilliantly represented by an impeccable selection of stunning impressions and well-chosen images. More than any of the catalogue's arguments, the prints convince us of Goya's extraordinary modernity. They are private meditations that draw upon a long tradition of folklore, superstition, political pamphlets, popular cartoons, and graphic high art from the Middle Ages to Goya's own day; at the same time, they are excoriating, unforgettable icons of internal and external horrors, both invented and observed. Their rapid line and schematic masses are expressive in ways immediately intelligible to twentieth-century eyes, even when the particular allusions are not. In the selections at the Met, there was little ambiguity in the meaning of Goya's fashionably dressed asses, duplicitous women, anonymous soldiers, and dismembered corpses, no matter how epigrammatic his captions may have seemed. (The labels and catalogue entries, by contrast, were masterpieces of complicated explication.)

A smaller group of obsessively worked drawings provided further evidence of the mature, introspective Goya, a man almost totally deaf after a nearly fatal illness at the age of forty-six and a witness to the chaos of the Napoleonic invasion, the Peninsular War, and a restored monarchy that proved to be more despotic than even Napoleon's government of occupation. Yet the so-called Black Goyas, the frescoes with which he decorated Quinto del Sordo, his villa outside of Madrid, toward the end of his life, were missing. They are not his best paintings and certainly not the proto-Expressionist marvels they are sometimes claimed to be—although one woman with a knife could have stepped out of Beckmann—but they are startling for their economy and directness, and for the ferocity and inwardness of their images. Goya worked on the frescoes from about 1820 to his departure for France in 1824, a time of enormous confusion in Spain, when the tentative, short-lived constitutional monarchy was assaulted and eventually replaced by a brutal restoration of absolute power. There are no royal commissions from this period; Goya was occupied, privately, with his prints and

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frescoes. While the *Caprichos* made their presence felt in the exhibition, the absence of major paintings from these years left a conspicuous gap and warped our sense of both Goya's capabilities and his relation to the world around him. Was it simply that the frescoes, now housed in a single room in the Prado, could not travel, or did the exhibition's organizers believe that they didn't fit their theme?

Goya is a great enough painter to survive even the most concerted didactic campaigns and, as I seem to keep saying, there were enough really wonderful pictures and prints to allow the artist to declare himself. The exhibition was no substitute for a day or two at the Prado, but it was possible to take Goya's measure, to discover once again, for example, that the master of the black-and-white print was also a master of painterly surfaces and of color. Color, in fact, often determines how good his pictures are, as much or more than tone and certainly more than drawing. It was possible, too, to glimpse Goya's evolution, from his early Italianate pictures, through his first, tense commissioned portraits and rococo genre scenes, to the full-blown, broadly handled portraits and savage graphics of his maturity.

Goya was a late bloomer, a common enough phenomenon among painters of the generation active after World War II, but rarer in artists of Goya's era. His early work, before he was in his forties, seems strangely limited, even naïve, despite his training and his travels in Italy. The figures in the early portraits are a little too small for the space they occupy; they're doll-like and stiff, especially the women, in spite of the fluidity and facility with which their costumes are painted. Goya was better at fashions than at the bodies that wore them, better at details of trimming than at articulation of the figure. Most of the time it doesn't matter, but in the early work it's noticeable.

At times, the rigidity and *smallness* of Goya's figures can make his early portraits seem wooden and distinctly odd, his sitters toylike, as in the group portrait of the Duke of Osuna and his family (1788, Museo del Prado). (The catalogue, of course, tells us that the Osunas were "the very model of the enlightened family.") But in other pictures, such as the portrait of Mariana de Pontejos, the disparity between Goya's nervous drawing and his delectable paint handling enlivens the picture. At first glance, the portrait seems simply a rather provincial version of the type of society portrait created by Gainsborough or his followers. There is the wonderful, billowing dress, a diaphanous confection of ruffles and puffs, the coquettish hat, the roses and ribbons. But the taut little figure has nothing to do with the relaxed English women who are her counterparts. There is no sense of possible release from the tight, erect pose. The model's feet seemed nailed together. She seems unaware that her right hand, with its mannered gesture, holds a carnation. The little dog in the foreground has more potential movement than its owner. Despite the differences of scale and mood, Goya's eighteenth-century fashion plate of Mariana de Pontejos ends up having more to do with Velásquez's seventeenth-century infantas, imprisoned in their crusty, embroidered dresses, than with the work of any of his real contemporaries. Only the color, silver grays and rose against the cool tones of an implied landscape, and the flicker of light on the transparent trimmings of the dress, point to what Goya would become.

It's instructive to compare the portrait of Mariana de Pontejos with Goya's first official portrait of the queen, *Queen María Luisa Wearing a Mantilla* (Patrimonial Nacional, Palacio Real, Madrid), painted over a decade later, in 1799. It's altogether a more relaxed and painterly effort, with the figure moving easily in space, although still erect and imposing; more important is the placement of the figure, closer to the bottom of the canvas, which renders the queen at once monumental and approachable. But it is Goya's extraordinary color—a range of ravishing, unnameable rose grays and mauve browns nailed by intersecting voluptuous blacks, the queen's pale skin tones, and her

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rosy bow—that really distinguishes the picture. It's a "Spanish" palette with a twist, the non-color that Spanish painters are traditionally supposed to be so good at, turned into an immensely subtle polychromy.

This kind of unexpected variation on a known formula recurs throughout Goya's career. The little *Sketch for the Death of Saint Joseph* (1787, Flint [Michigan] Institute of Arts) seems conventional enough, at first. The foreshortened, reclining St. Joseph is held tenderly by Christ, accompanied by the Virgin and a trio of cherubs, but the saint's upraised head and the extreme flatness of his torso make everything twist and struggle around the center of the picture. Delicate, fragile colors—cream, rose, and dull yellow—contrast with the far from tranquil mood of the painting; the absence of the pale blue usually associated with this palette in eighteenth-century painting is surprising, as surprising as the wrenched pose of the dying saint.

Goya is equally unpredictable in his own terms—that is, apart from any relation to conventions. The late 1790s, when he was in his fifties, saw the production of his most assured large-scale portraits, both public and private, and at the same time a series of small, fantastic pictures of witches' sabbaths and flying satanists. (*Witches in the Air* [1797-98, collection Jaime Ortiz-Patiño], with its floating knot of dunce-capped figures bearing a struggling victim, is a picture that stops you in your tracks.) The doll-like figures of Goya's early portraits are transformed into agile little marionettes enacting strange dramas in spectacular light. The series was apparently included in the show because it was commissioned by the Duchess of Osuna, who, you will be surprised to learn, "epitomized the intellectual of her age," "a model of the enlightened woman who used her wealth to support the work of scientists, artists and writers." Presumably the paintings' kinship with images in the *Caprichos* and the *Disparates* was also a consideration.

But it's the large-scale later works that are the most memorable. The Cleveland Museum of Art's *Saint Ambrose* (1796-99), with its blocky forms defined by boldly placed planes of shimmering white and off-white, for example, is a knockout that recalls the almost Cubist simplifications of form of Goya's superb frescoes in Madrid's San Antonio de la Florida chapel, executed in 1798. (For once, an available picture substitutes adequately for an obviously unattainable major work.) Outstanding, too, is the dazzling portrait of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1798, Museo del Prado), with its subtly orchestrated mauves, viridians, and ochres and its sliding diagonal composition that makes the sitter's head rest so heavily on his hand. The portrait is an extraordinary depiction of a man described as "the greatest intellectual of the Spanish Enlightenment," the author of important papers on legal and educational reform. The sumptuous setting, the gilded desk and chair, the protective statue of the goddess of wisdom, the suggestion of rich textiles—all serve to emphasize Jovellanos's isolation and introspection.

Goya's sympathetic portraits of important liberal thinkers of eighteenth-century Spain, such as Jovellanos, Juan Antonio Meléndez Valdés, a magistrate, poet, and philosopher, and Juan Antonio Llorente, a leading legal reformer—the last not a particularly good picture, however—give credence to the exhibition's thesis. It's worth noting, though, that Goya was also painting Carlos IV and his amazingly unattractive family at more or less the same time as he was painting portraits of "ilustrados." (Could the king and queen and their relatives have been so grotesque that Goya's seemingly pitiless portraits were really flattering? The dog in the exhibition's official portrait of Carlos IV in hunting costume [1799, Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio Real, Madrid] looks far more intelligent than his master.)

Around this time Goya was painting, too, the queen's lover, Don Manuel Godoy (1801, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid), an able and progressive minister, according to the catalogue,

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although you'd never know it by the look of him. A self-indulgent-looking type with a heavy, unpleasant face, Godoy is presented as a peculiarly inflexible voluptuary, reclining stiffly on what looks like a sofa but is identified as a "field commander's chair," which explains what it is doing on a battlefield. Nothing quite makes sense spatially in this wonderful picture. Distances expand and contract at will, as they do in Mannerist works two centuries earlier, while the middle-ground frieze of horses and soldiers anticipates much of Géricault and Delacroix, who learned a great deal from paintings like this one. For all the abandonment of the pose and the freedom of Goya's paint handling, the picture remains tense because of its odd space and because of the pull across the surface between Godoy and the red flag that cuts the left-hand corner of the painting. This movement is countered, in part, by the abrupt backward tug of the compressed right side of the picture, an illogical perspectival progression from Godoy to his aide (who is confined to an inexplicable space behind him) to a small, shako-ed soldier leading a horse. It's an unstable, fascinating picture that gets better the longer you look. With time, the smoky blue of the background makes the smoothly painted reds and golds of Godoy's uniform glow; his pale fawn breeches seem luminous, while the middle ground of brushy, grayed horses seems to pulsate.

The subtlest and probably the most arresting of the official portraits is the vast painting of General José de Palafox on a galloping horse (1814, Museo del Prado). It's an ordinary enough motif. The popular general is shown in an utterly traditional manner, in full military regalia, sitting easily on his horse and brandishing a sword; his head is turned to give the spectator a better view of the famous face. But by thickening the horse's neck and simplifying the head, darkening the muzzle and lightening the flank, Goya implies that Palafox's mount is travelling at great speed, plunging into the depths of the ample, almost square canvas. The tail is cut by the edge of the canvas, implying the general has just charged into view. The schematic suggestion of fire in the distance—a rough bundle of strokes under the horse's nose—forces our attention back and to the edge of the canvas, adding to the speed of the gallop. Goya worked on a reddish ground in this portrait, as the Venetians often did, and a warm, rosy tone suffuses the picture, doing remarkable things to the color of the sky and the horse's pale flank. The conventional composition proves increasingly complex. Goya had a fine time offsetting the picture's virtually quadripartite divisions—created by the general's upright figure and the back of his horse—with the arcs of sword and scabbard, the tighter curve of the horse's rump, and the general's elegant hat.

It's easy to see why an exhibition like "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment" should be mounted just now. The new, post-Franco Spain is hot. Today's Spain is a lively, freewheeling place—Madrid prides itself on its *movida*—eager to banish associations with its Franco past. The idea of a Spanish Enlightenment, with its associations of liberalism, rationalism, anti-clericalism, and resistance to despotic authority, is a far more appealing heritage than the Inquisition, tyrannical inbred monarchs, or, more recently, fascist dictatorship and repression. One cynical reviewer suggested that the only reason any pictures were made available from the Prado and from Spanish collections was because of the exhibition's political subtext. The catalogue, however, is far more than a polemical assertion of politically desirable relationships. Full of provocative, detailed essays about the period, it includes arcane and fascinating information about codes of costume, Goya's relation to Northern medieval carnival imagery, and everything you could possibly wish to know about the subjects of the portraits and the owners of the fantasy and genre pictures. (Yes, the individual entries can be somewhat repetitious and flat-footed.) There's even a successful attempt to unravel the intricacies of Spanish history in the late eighteenth and

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early nineteenth centuries, with its fluctuations of power and its abortive attempts at constitutional monarchy alternating with absolute monarchy and war. It's absorbing reading, but, like the exhibition, it tends to reduce Goya's art to illustration. Portraits, for example, are discussed in terms of the biographies of the sitters more than as pictures.

In the end, Goya's work must stand or fall on its own merits, apart from all historical detail and explication; it would have been stimulating to have seen an exhibition based on that premise. As it was, the Met did little to help sort out the art from the contextualism. I kept remembering how the National Gallery supplemented the show of Cézanne's early work with an installation of later work drawn from its own and other Washington collections. The Met *did* hang a few of its less familiar Goyas in the André Meyer wing, including that stunning portrait of a small boy in a green velvet jacket, José Costa y Bunells (c. 1810), but they removed from exhibition their superb *Majas on a Balcony* (1800-14), the dazzling painting of women and soldiers that provoked Manet's masterpiece, *The Balcony* (1868-69, Musée d'Orsay), and Helen Frankenthaler's energetic, spare *Las Majas* (1958, Private Collection). "Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment" included a rarely seen sister painting of *Majas on a Balcony*, a painting of a voluptuous young woman and a procuress at a window (1808-12, Collection of D. Bartolomé March Servera). It would have been extraordinary to be able to compare the two pictures side by side, but the curators, instead of including *Majas on a Balcony* in the exhibition (or even installing it elsewhere in the building, which would have been less frustrating than total invisibility), sent the picture off to Spain, a hostage for one of the works loaned for the show.

The most notable omission was, ironically, Goya's most potent image of protest against tyrannical power, the haunting *The Third of May* (1808, Museo del Prado), with its faceless executioners, desperate victims, and searing light, its palpable blacks, creamy whites, and glowing yellows, its accusing, uncowed rebel with arms stretched wide. *The Third of May* might be Goya's best painting. It is almost certainly his most unforgettable. Manet kept trying to paint a picture that would exorcise his memory of *The Third of May* and kept cutting the result into sections, a group of soldiers here, a few figures there, out of dissatisfaction; Picasso paid homage to the picture in *Guernica*, with its blazing electric light. That the Prado wouldn't lend this touchstone of its Goya collection is not surprising, but its absence was conspicuous, both aesthetically, as a masterpiece—maybe *the* masterpiece—of the mature Goya, and ideologically, as an unequivocal declaration of his political views, his opposition to the Napoleonic invasion of Spain.

Like Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, *The Third of May* gives an image to a contemporary, scandalous event, an image that has outlived the currency of the moment that provoked it because of its potency as a painting. The picture is one of a pair that commemorate the uprising of a group of Madrilenos against a detachment of cavalry led by the French general Murat on May 2, 1808, and the French regime's reprisal the next day, the execution of forty citizens. Goya didn't see the executions, but his staging of the event has the immediacy and pungency of a modern-day news photo—the screaming student at Kent State, say. Even if you don't know the story, the painting is an emblem of horror, of helplessness, that more than anything in the exhibition or in the catalogue makes believable the notion that Goya might have been as much a liberal as the Met's exhibition would have us believe. If only the picture had been in the show. If only the show had been more comprehensive or better chosen.

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Comedy of styles

by Jed Perl

Modern artists make jokes through juxtapositions. Cubism offers the Ur-example: a Victorian tassel hanging in an angular modern setting. This comedy of styles is by no means the only kind of comedy in modern art, but because it is formalist—based on juxtaposing forms in unlikely ways—it's uniquely modern. Examples can be found in the collages of Schwitters and Cornell, the sculptures of Picasso and Calder, the paintings of Klee, Léger, Miró, and Gerald Murphy. Like the comedy of manners, which flourishes in periods when manners are changing but a generally accepted idea of manners is still vivid in people's minds, the comedy of styles flourishes in periods when styles are in flux but the idea of stylistic homogeneity remains credible. Perhaps this is why it has been more difficult to sustain a comedy of styles since World War II. In the early decades of the century such juxtapositions were often meant as celebrations of a new age: by invoking previous styles, artists demonstrated exactly how contemporary the contemporary world was. But as the line separating premodern and modern becomes hazier, it is more difficult to believe in a comedy of styles. The clarifying humor in Saul Steinberg's dizzy drawings of postwar New York has to do with the artist's sense of the city as a mélange of styles where no clear principle of contrast or construction obtains. But Steinberg's taste was formed in Europe, before he came to America, and so he brings to New York the old sense of unity. The art-historical juxtapositions in the recent paintings of Roy Lichtenstein fall flat because neither the artist nor his audience has a general idea about the value of style against which to measure Lichtenstein's devaluations. When nobody knows anything about style, style can no longer be a laughing matter.

Trevor Winkfield's brilliant comic paintings, which were at the Edward Thorp Gallery last April, make the best of this problematic situation. Winkfield gives his unlikely juxtapositions of styles old and new a free-standing authority. He hasn't gotten himself in over his head in the postmodern style wars, perhaps because he's not a New York art-world insider. For one thing, this forty-five-year-old English expatriate has continued to cultivate a very British brand of nursery humor even as he's lived in New York for the past twenty years. For another thing, parallel to his career as a painter, he has a career as a translator (of Raymond Roussel) and editor (of the short-lived literary magazine *Juilliard*, which was named after one of Roussel's characters). Not surprisingly, the people who praise Winkfield's discombobulated narrative paintings are often poets. They respond to the Surrealist twist that Winkfield gives to Edwardian whimsy. John Ashbery has written that Winkfield's "crisply painted concatenations of unlikely objects, which make Lautréamont's famous dissecting table with its umbrella and sewing machine look

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decidedly underpopulated, have attracted a small but fanatical group of admirers, including myself." That "small but fanatical group of admirers" is cheering on a truly independent artist.

The formal manner with which Winkfield presents his array of eccentric images reminds me of Edith Sitwell's voice racing through the tongue-twisting passages of *Façade*, the cycle of poems with a William Walton score. Winkfield's paintings *are* façades: elegant funhouse façades, composed of sharply colored fragments set against expanses of sparkling white. The figures that tumble around in Winkfield's Flatland are jolly mutants composed of clothespins and assorted oddments. The make-up of somebody's left arm or leg tells you nothing at all about the make-up of their right one. Winkfield's paintings never achieve a magical unity, but they're constructed wonderfully, and it's a pleasure to watch as figures and objects in a range of styles emerge, unfold, and transform. As you look at the paintings, the literary, expatriate, and formalist elements in Winkfield's personality merge to create a sort of Poussin of the Five and Dime. Of a 1930s, Art Deco Five and Dime.

Winkfield paints slowly and only exhibits sporadically, so it's difficult to say exactly how his work has evolved, but my own impression is that this show was a big step forward for him. Many of the earlier pictures (up to five years ago or so) were done in acrylic on paper in sizes up to twenty-two by thirty inches. The paintings in the recent Thorp show are all bigger and all done in acrylic on canvas. They *feel* painted. Winkfield's conceits take on a more full-bodied presence. The white fields aren't just blank spaces; they have the immanence of white spaces in classic Constructivist art. And the brushwork has an impact. Moving in close, you see the changes in shapes, the pile-up of small strokes at the edges of a form. From a distance, all this registers, as it were, invisibly, giving the painting a certain weight as an imagined world.

But what is most exciting in these new Winkfields is their fullness: it's the multiplication of incidents and events that makes them the most consistently engaging pictures he's done. Here you don't find one nerd-like character and a few odd objects per painting. While there's still most always a central figure, you're in effect confronted by multiplying madness. The boy at the center of *The Hunt* has a bell for an eye, an iris for a hat, and is surrounded by a gaggle of things that includes a bus, a feather, a snowflake, a shell, some naval motifs. The figure with the wizened medieval face in *Banishing Bricks and Pills* has a blue-and-white polka-dot bow tie, a skeleton foot, a yellow and green hand, and a clock for a torso. He's surrounded by more naval motifs, cocktail glasses, a skyline that forms the torso of another character who's got wheels instead of legs . . . it goes on and on. And what keeps it all going is the wit with which one form segues into another. Winkfield creates a rippling movement across much—or all—of a painting by repeating the same precipitously angled form again and again. The paintings are patchworks in which everything carries through. Sometimes you'll be following the sequence of forms—as form—and suddenly realize, "Oh, gee, that's a cocktail glass." (This is in *Banishing Bricks and Pills*.) And then you realize that there are four of them, and that one of them resembles the anchor in another corner of the painting.

All this is realized in flat, posterish color schemes that recall the work of Stuart Davis. It's not great color, but then Davis's isn't, either. While Winkfield's color is too evenly pitched to really generate a sense of light, it has more variety and resonance than one may at first imagine. (There are deep-toned paintings, like *Divinity Meadow*; and shrill ones, like *The Hunt*.) The same variety is to be found in Winkfield's forms. The individual elements—silhouetted objects, faces and fragments copied (maybe stenciled) from medieval prints and nineteenth-century illustrations—have a formal interest as well as a narrative one. The inclusion of premodern passages as an element in a modern graphic style brings to mind

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sophisticated commercial design of the Fifties and Sixties—the work of Paul Rand, Milton Glaser, and Peter Max. (Those designers, in their turn, had looked at Cubism.) But Winkfield isn't overwhelmed by his borrowings. He knits them into his own cheerful, ever-so-mildly-psychotic vision. Winkfield arrived in New York at the end of the Sixties, and the work he's doing now has some of the giddy silliness of that period. He brings to mind the Jefferson Airplane song "White Rabbit," in which one pill makes you larger and one makes you small. (It goes without saying that Winkfield invokes Lewis Carroll.) Winkfield comes about as close as any artist ever has to the mindlessly innocent fun of the Beatles cartoon movie *Yellow Submarine*. This Englishman still has fantasies about our all living together in a Yellow Submarine.

Trevor Winkfield's paintings amuse without actually making us laugh out loud. It's rare that a painting makes us laugh out loud. Comedy—which is based on timing, and dramatic juxtapositions—is always a bit uncomfortable when it's trapped in the enclosed, formalized frame of a painting. The painters who are humorists produce a humor that, even when it's based on outrageous caricature, is rather dry in its effect. If you do laugh, it's inwardly. But comedy that makes you laugh inwardly has its dangers: it can be precious. (Instead of making you laugh, it can make you feel virtuous about the idea that you laugh; it can produce highbrow canned laughter.) The compositional rigor of Winkfield's paintings is part of what gives them their edge against preciousness—or at least against excessive preciousness. (And the more rigorous the composition, the less precious the humor: Klee is a compositional genius.) Composition is also what makes Winkfield's comedy feel disinterested, self-contained. Humor in painting must be disinterested; if it's interested, it's graphic art, another thing entirely.

A lot of the comedy in recent art is overly interested: it has an axe to grind. When conceptual art feigns humor—which is often the case with Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger, and the relative newcomer Christopher Wool—comedy tends to pass over into irony, a corrosive kind of irony. The artist (and the viewer) are involved in a send-up or send-down of the very idea of the work of art. The pretense may be a comedy of styles, but the subtext is an ideology of styles. Such deconstructions have considerable cultural authority right now; but they give no joy to the gallery-goer, which may be why there is a shifting among artists away from irony and back toward comedy. Though Winkfield is too much his own man to tell us anything much about the scene, the higher profile that his work has achieved in recent years may indicate that people are increasingly sympathetic to a comic vision. Richard Pettibone, an artist who was known in the Sixties for whimsically miniaturized copies of Andy Warhols, was again in the limelight last winter with a show of whimsically miniaturized copies of Brancusis at the Curt Marcus Gallery. This is another sign that light comedy, however misbegotten, is popular. And in April, at the John Good Gallery, Christopher Lucas, who's in his early thirties, created a mixed media environment that was comical in mood.

Lucas's exhibit didn't have a Yellow Submarine, but it might as well have: there was a rowboat with polka-dot decorations, a kiddie slide, and a sled. On the walls there were pictures made of sewn cloth that looked like banners—banners in search of a cause. One finds pieces of a lot of artists here—Mike Kelley and Matt Mullican (in the banners), Jennifer Bartlett (in the boat). But Lucas's work conveys a certain genial innocence that is to some degree his own. The slide, of partly-painted-partly-stained wood with some nursery decals stuck on here and there, is a case of Dada meets Constructivism. It has charm. The novelist William Burroughs, in a catalogue note, explained that these are "not just pretty bric-a-brac, but means to spiritual journeys and experience." I don't know about that. I'd call

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Lucas's show a comic Constructivist stage set waiting for the performance to begin.

Constructivism and comedy isn't an entirely unlikely match. There's a comic side to the three-dimensional concoctions of the Russian Suprematists; and De Stijl and the Bauhaus, in their more decorative works, have a wit to them, too. While the comedy in the old Constructivism was an overflow of the high spirits of idealism, the new comedy of Constructivism is a by-product of the ironic attitude that is currently taken toward all historical styles. If Constructivism once signified otherworldliness, it may now signify rootlessness. At least that is how it looked to me after I saw the work of some young Russian artists, members of the Friends of Mayakovsky Club in Leningrad, who were the subject of a private showing at a townhouse on East Fifty-first Street last spring. The painter Sergei Bugaev, who also goes by the name Afrika, had brought over the work of eleven artists including himself. The members of the Friends of Mayakovsky Club are fascinated by recent artistic developments in the West (recent for them includes everything as far back as Pop Art), and they're also fascinated by the founding generation of the Russian avant-garde. They seem to want to hold Malevich and Warhol in their imaginations simultaneously. Actually, what is Pop in their work is closer to Europeans like Sigmar Polke than to American Pop. Many of the paintings are done, Polke-style, on found fabrics—partly because canvas is unavailable but partly, one suspects, for aesthetic reasons as well. Bugaev stencils onto found textiles à la Polke and achieves some sweet effects. He tickles us by pretending that he's a little old Russian folk artist who has somehow heard about modern art. *Winter in the Crimea* is a piece of white lace stenciled with a yellow sun and a few pine trees. Those flat, single-colored shapes bring the Constructivists to mind; just as the pose of Giorgi Gurianov's gray *Soccer Player* brings to mind a pose of Nijinsky in his tennis ballet, *Jeux*. Heroic modernism is a series of picture postcards for these artists. And why shouldn't it be? What opportunity have they had to see it firsthand?

Sergei Bugaev and the other members of the Friends of Mayakovsky Club are trying in their own perhaps necessarily disorderly way to resurrect an indigenous modern art tradition that was killed off before it had a chance to take root. That the post-Cubist simplifications of Malevich and El Lissitzky are now becoming the raw material for one-dimensional comic routines is at least in part because that Russian modernist tradition doesn't offer the parodist much resistance. It's a great but thin style. Even in the supreme form of Mondrian's Neo-plasticism, Constructivism is the riskiest of modern styles, the style that buries its connections to the past most completely. For Russian artists whose government has denied them access to the past, and for American artists who are as ignorant but perhaps more personally culpable, Constructivism is attractive precisely because it looks like the style that came from nowhere. It's turning into the nowhere style for Nowhere Men. (Ironically, it ends up being the only historical style that some younger artists know anything about.) Sergei Bugaev and Christopher Lucas are victims of a late modern comedy of styles. They're the people for whom Roy Lichtenstein's art-historical pastiches are the entire history of art. They're the nerds in Trevor Winkfield's fantasias, spinning round and round in a Museum without Walls that's been reduced to the dimensions of a Classic Comic.

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Books

Puritanism with a human face

by James W. Tuttleton

Is it necessary to have a clear grasp of the Puritans in order to understand contemporary American culture? Didn't modern America really commence some time after Puritanism had, like Oliver Wendell Holmes's wonderful one-hoss shay, collapsed in a single heap? Or at least after it had faded away with the rise of a more aggressive rationalist mercantile economy? That an understanding of the Puritan forefathers *is* indispensable to knowing who we are older American historians took for granted and, in doing so, traced various lines suggesting the continuity of our cultural development: the connection, say, between modern Protestantism and the Puritan church, between Revolutionary Era politics and Puritan separatism, between our evolving capitalist economy and Puritan doctrines of wealth and stewardship.

But the older conviction that we could know ourselves by knowing the Puritans has come under assault in recent decades, and a twofold tendency has developed amongst some historians: to distance ourselves from the Puritans; or, if we cannot disconnect ourselves from them completely, to denounce them as the source of "present evils."

Perry Miller, one of the foremost historians of the colonial era, inaugurated a line of thought about Puritanism that virtually cut them off from some aspects of our recent cultural evolution. In *The New England Mind* (1939-53), Miller composed a historical paradigm according to which the Puritans—after fleeing Anglican persecution in 1620 and establishing the Kingdom of God in New England—suffered a decline from their original piety into compulsive capitalist entrepreneurship and a moralism more inauthentic, if not more hypocritical, than real.

Some recent historians, mainly counter-culture figures of the Sixties, have denied this thesis of a Puritan "declension" and have argued that there are in fact links between the Puritans and us. The connections are said to be horrifying. Our political "messianism," for example, as illustrated in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and our so-called politics of "world domination," are nowadays often said to be the doubtful and destructive legacy of the Puritans. In *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence* (1986), for example, Ann Kibbey has grotesquely opined that "despite their appearance of otherworldly concerns in preaching the soul's salvation, ministers such as John Cotton subordinated belief in the deity to another end: communicating the absolute rightness of their own social ideals." These social ideals, according to her, sanctioned destructive prejudices and even "mass killing." The relationship between the Puritans and the Indians has especially come in for attack. In *The Invasion of America* (1975), Francis Jennings maintains that the Great Migration was in fact merely a sustained war waged by the Puritans against

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the hapless aborigines. Sacvan Bercovitch has even argued that "the Puritans used the Biblical myth of exodus and conquest to justify imperialism *before the fact*" (my italics). And a few years ago we had it on the authority of the sitting president of the Modern Language Association, the notorious deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller, that the Puritans could best be understood as a people "who massacred the Indians and established the self-righteous religion and politics that determined American ideology." (Such an appalling reduction of the experience of a remarkable immigrant group is almost enough to make one agree with deconstructionists that their language does not refer to a real world or to a history that we can know—in this case, the history that comes down to us through Puritan diaries, letters, and sermons.) The implication is clear, in any event, that Puritan values are so ghastly to the modern mind that disengagement from them is a first order of business.

That our literary history is now largely in the hands of left-wing ideologists who exhibit cultural self-hatred and contempt for our past is a demoralizing fact of contemporary scholarship. But surprise gives way to respect and a measure of admiration when we take up *The Puritan Ordeal* by Andrew Delbanco, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University.[1] This wholly original study of Puritan life undertakes to rescue the Puritans "from becoming merely stick-figure messengers of an ideology from which we may wish to free ourselves, or, for that matter, which we may wish to embrace." Taking as its premise the view that "the real, central theme of History is not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening," Delbanco concentrates not on the doctrines and dogmas of the Puritans (the stock-in-trade of most colonial historians) but rather upon affective states that are disclosed in Puritan language and rhetoric. Above all, he is concerned "with the fate of feeling" in the "process of Americanization." This approach humanizes the Puritans, in the fluid configuration of whose emotional lives we can now see ourselves more clearly foreshadowed.

Delbanco's point of entry into the emotional life of the Puritans is the Doctrine of Preparation. This doctrine obliged the penitential Puritan to examine, rigorously, the state of his soul with a view to determining whether he was a candidate for salvation. The obligation "to perform meticulous self-examination at each stage of the soul's progress was by no means a universal comfort," Delbanco observes. "By watching New Englanders divide over the meanings and effects of such inquisitorial doctrines (pressed by some of the clergy; eased and softened by others) we are able to witness the division of early American culture into premodern and modern selves." Such an approach, he is confident, will produce a richer sense of Puritan life than that produced by left-liberal historians, for whom accounts of American history have become "one and the same—a tedious sequence of bourgeois consciousness in version after indistinguishable version." In this view he is quite right.

The purpose of Preparation, as one Puritan minister put it, was to "bring under, tame, and subdue the stubburnnesse of mans nature." This was done by an accusation against the conscience through the application of church doctrine, with the effect that the "feares & terrors" arising in the soul would produce "compunction of the heart, which is the apprehending of Gods anger against sinne." If the self-interrogation were diligent enough, perhaps there would be felt a readiness for the infusion into the soul of God's grace.

Delbanco is not so much interested in the doctrine as such as he is in the emotional consequence of dealing with it. While some ministers stressed the strictest discipline in self-interrogation, for others grace was the free gift of God and no spiritual exercise or ritual of preparation could induce it, and

1 *The Puritan Ordeal*, by Andrew Delbanco; Harvard University Press, 320 pages, $30.

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salvation could not be merited through good works. (For, after all, orthodoxy held that election or damnation was providentially foreordained from the foundation of the world.) As a result of this latter view, some New Englanders claimed to have had the experience of grace without submitting themselves to the preparatory self-interrogation, without feeling the "feares & terrors"; thus they felt justified in defying the doctrinal demands of most New England churches. The "feeling" that God had suffused them with His grace delivered them, they held, from subordination to ecclesiastical formalism. A contention thereupon arose in the New England churches over the place of feeling—particularly feelings associated with the state of grace—in the lives of the communicants.

Delbanco explores, in a wonderfully dense and detailed narrative, the status of feeling as the immigrants settled these shores, developed their churches, corresponded with their brethren in England, and saw some of their fellows return, especially during the Cromwellian revolution. He attends to their emotions of fear and rejection, doubt and longing, pride and anger, homesickness and loss, and joy and elation—as these are fluidly expressed in the public utterance of the Puritan leaders.

How did they deal with and express these feelings? In particular, how much authenticity, as a sign of election, could be accorded to feeling itself? This was a problem the Puritans wrestled with continually. One cannot give here a full account of Delbanco's treatment of the fate of feeling in New England. But some idea of the richness of the book may be suggested by a consideration of fear, "the chief emotion of religious efficacy." Fear, of course, played a major role in the inward lives of the Puritans, especially in relation to immigration—for example, fear of Anglican persecution and fear of the corruption of their children by an increasingly mercantile England and Holland. But once here, other fears overtook them—fear of the savagery of the Indians, fear of the spiritual defection of their children (as the plantations prospered and the immigrant world became more like the mercantile world they had left behind), and fear that some of the congregants were abandoning dogma and liturgy for a "sentimental" private spiritualism. Overriding every other concern was of course the fear that one might, despite piety and good works, be one of those predestined to damnation.

Thus it was that a number of the early Puritans—terrified by what developed in the self-inquisition demanded by the Doctrine of Preparation—began to claim that a divine and supernatural light, God's grace, had entered them, that their lives were delivered from fear. They insisted on their sanctification by faith because they felt it so. The Doctrine of Preparation was insisted upon in turn by the "legall churches" as a way of constraining these "antinomian" enthusiasts (many of whom were women) and of imposing psychological and political control on the congregations. As Jonathan Edwards was later to say—in defending the emotionalism of those claiming grace in the surprising conversions of the Great Awakening—"Persons are very ready to be suspicious of what they ha'nt felt."

As the legalist ministers enforced a religion of rigorous self-examination and sanctification associated with good works and insisted on visible, proven evidence of godliness, the pure, original, and authentic Puritan doctrine of sin, according to Delbanco, was replaced by something more sinister. Originally, the Puritan idea of sin was that defined by St. Augustine. In his interpretation, evil "is not any substance," since if it were a substance, created by God, it would be good; and since all things *were* created by God and since he could not create evil, evil is not a substantial reality. Perhaps Edwards gave the Augustinian doctrine of sin its clearest Puritan expression in remarking that "sin radically and fundamentally consists in what is negative, or privative, having its root and foundation in a privation or want of holiness." Emerson echoes this notion in "The Divinity School Address" by remarking that "Good is positive. Evil is

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merely privative, not absolute. It is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity." An extension of this view, of course, is that since Evil is not an active agency in the affairs of men, Satan does not exist. Sin is only a separation from God. Most Puritans, however, settled on the view that Satan does exist, that he can invade and corrupt the individual soul, and that evil must be driven out, even, perhaps, at the cost of the life of the sinner.

The decisive event in the Puritan ministers' struggle against those who claimed an exemption from dogma and church commandments—based on the feeling of personal beatitude—was the case of Anne Hutchinson. In the 1630s she had begun to preside at home gatherings, ostensibly to "repeat" church sermons that shut-ins had been unable to hear. But these broadened into church services, despite St. Paul's prohibition against women preaching. Her presentations were enthusiastic and smacked suspiciously of the wild "prophesying" by women whom the Puritans had earlier condemned in England. Hutchinson's popularity grew so rapidly that she began to rival the ministers and the church itself. Although most New Englanders wanted only "legal preachers" who would "bring people under a covenant of works," Anne Hutchinson insisted on the pre-eminence of grace. Moreover, some ministers were inclined to agree with her theology, though they complained that her "tongue wagged incautiously." These ministers could not deny that God's grace *might*—as it had in the case of Saul of Tarsus—flood the soul with what the minister John Cotton called an "illuministic and . . . noetic awareness of union with the Holy Ghost." Cotton conceded that the experience of grace could be a delusion of Satan, but he (for one) was not willing to outlaw the possibility of a private revelation:

> It is true; for the devil himself will transform himself into an Angel of light: he will be foisting in delusions, yea, many times when the soul waiteth for the revelation of God's mercy, the Devil will be apt to foist in such revelations, from whence many delusions may grow. But yet on the other side, let not men be afraid, and say that we have no *revelation* but the *word*; for I do believe, and dare confidently affirme, that if there were no revelation but the word, there would be no spiritual grace revealed to the soul.

Protesting to the end that she had been vouchsafed a union with the Holy Spirit "by an immediate revelation"—a claim that she could not prove except on the ground of her subjective feeling of graciousness—Anne Hutchinson was tried and condemned for heresy in 1637 and exiled from the colony. Satan was real: the ministers concluded that Evil had actively reared up its head in Massachusetts; and the Devil had foisted a delusion on, and had become incarnate in, the stiff-necked Anne Hutchinson. Henceforth, there could be no tolerance of spiritual enthusiasm, especially on the part of women, in New England churches. Men and women had to submit themselves to the discipline of the ministers, to the terrors provoked by the preparationist doctrine, to a sanctification proved (if at all) by good works. That the antinomian crisis provoked a desperation for the experience of grace is suggested by this account from the year 1637:

> A man of Weymouth (but not of the church there) fell into some trouble of mind, and in the night cried out, "Art thou come, Lord Jesus?" and with that leaped out of his bed in his shirt, and, breaking from his wife, leaped out at [*sic*] high window into the snow, and ran about seven miles off, and being traced in the snow, was found dead the next morning. They might perceive, that he had kneeled down to prayer in divers places.

Delbanco finds in this Puritan struggle over the authenticity of subjective feeling as a ground for faith and morals, and in the struggle over whether Evil is an active principle or the mere privation or absence of holiness, *the* basis for claiming a continuity

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between the premodern and modern American self. Anne Hutchinson lost, but the premodern principle for which she stood has survived, Delbanco argues, and flourished. For him, American history comes down to the generational clash of two large conflicts: the conflict between private and institutional authority; and between the view that people are evil—that is, possessed of an evil that must be expunged—and the view that antinomian feelings may be God's way of working out some larger providential intention.

Emerson would later defend antinomianism on two grounds: first, that apparent evil might be universal good; second, that, even if an impulse was Satanic, one had to follow it. Of course, Emerson did not believe that God could work evil through the self, and he denied that antinomian impulses were Satanic: "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil." No law, Emerson went on to say, "can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution."

We see the intermittent success of this antinomian impulse in many forms: in Edwards's emotional preaching during the Great Awakening in the 1730s; in Hester's justifying her adultery with Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* on the ground that "what we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so"; in Emerson's denial of Evil; in Transcendentalism's rejection of religious doctrines and institutions in favor of the life of free spiritual development; in Whitman's putting creeds and schools in abeyance in favor of an original relation to nature; in E. E. Cummings's "Since feeling is first . . ."; in Hemingway's claim that the moral is what you feel good after; in the Beat Generation, or in any countercultural affectation of the spiritual life that appears to be antinomian.

Delbanco, as I read him, associates the Puritan antinomian impulse and its derivations with a "premodern self" capable of ecstasy but perennially crushed in the triumph of doctrine, dogma, and convention. For him, the modern self in America, originating with the Puritans, has been ready to divide people into the Elect and the Damned and to call for the eradication of those complicit in evil. Many of the forms of our romantic antinomianism since the seventeenth century seem trivial beside the high seriousness of the Puritans. But Delbanco is convinced that

> with all their indignation at the enthusiasts of their own time, and with their assent to the doctrine of depravity, the fact remains that [the Puritans] were the first Americans to enact the paradigm that underlies all romantic projects. Their typology collapsed time into what one of them called the "remaining Now"; their antinomianism (never entirely suppressed) collapsed space into an ecstatic unity wherein self and God became interfused. With as much mixed bitterness and exhilaration as Whitman was later to muster, they turned away from all forms of mediacy—historical, institutional, even scriptural—and dared to assert the direct apprehension by the believer of the divine.

When Delbanco concludes that "*all* American literature is essentially romantic" (my italics), he overstates the case and undervalues the "dissident voices" of Hawthorne, Poe, Eliot, and others who have seen into what Melville called "the power of blackness." He likewise neglects the power of the conservative tradition (especially in religion and politics) that has continually criticized and tried to constrain the negative cultural effects of romanticism—its lack of self-discipline, glorification of feeling, denial of evil, distrust of institutions, and unfounded optimism about human nature. It is true that "if it were possible to imagine a culture fully committed to the [romantic] view—whether we call it Platonic or Augustinian or Antinomian—such a culture would yield an entirely different sort of social world from the one in which we live or the one we know from the record of history." But a longing for "the world [as] imagined by our ecstatic writers" must invariably collide with the Reality

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Principle as conservatism has described it. And invariably it does.

Despite his nostalgia for what never was, and for what is never likely to be, Delbanco has written an impressive rejoinder to the Puritan-bashers. He has shown our forefathers as inaugurating—and suffering in their own time—the personal, religious, and political confusions we have not yet resolved. And, in doing so, he has defended America herself as "something better" than the "imperialist power," hungry for "world domination," that we are made out to be by the left-wing historians.

In the most exalted ranks

John Rewald Cézanne and America. Princeton University Press, 352 pages, $49.50

reviewed by William C. Agee

Writing in 1917, the American critic Henry McBride could proclaim in his review of an exhibition at the Arden Gallery in New York that Cézanne was now "in the most exalted ranks." John Rewald's new book, *Cézanne and America*, recounts just how Cézanne came to achieve that position in this country. It should be said from the start—and make no mistake about it—*Cézanne in America* is an exemplary book, a signal event in American art history with far-reaching implications for the field. It brings alive the long struggle to secure modernism here, from which Cézanne emerged, as McBride termed him, the "most potent influence on the art of his time." Year by year, we relive that struggle, and in so doing we learn a staggering amount about American art, much of which has been only dimly or incompletely understood, if at all, until the publication of this book. It makes us consider the very basis of Cézanne and his art and why that art today remains as demanding and compelling as ever. We ponder once again why it is that we submerge ourselves in Cézanne as we do in few other artists. John Rewald published his first article on Cézanne in 1936, more than fifty years ago, and his lifetime of research and experience stands behind every page of *Cézanne and America*.

The book is based on the 1979 A. W. Mellon Lectures given at the National Gallery of Art and is published by Princeton in the Bollingen series. From cover to cover it is a beautiful book, well produced at every turn, as we have come to expect from this series. The color plates are unusually fine, including the cover reproduction of the moving *Woman with Rosary*, 1895-6 (National Gallery, London), famous in America because it was included in the Armory Show. Its depth of feeling, comparable to Rembrandt's late work, tells us right away of the book's intensity and seriousness. Rewald also tells us right away the scope of the book; the full title is *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891-1921*. The first sentence of the foreword makes clear that the book is concerned with the "slow process through which Cézanne became known in America" rather than with Cézanne's influence on specific American artists. Yet there is more in the way of Cézanne's effect on our artists than we might expect from this statement, as in Rewald's illuminating accounts of Maurice Prendergast, Marsden Hartley, Alfred Maurer, Morgan Russell, and Patrick Henry Bruce. Because the book is so rich and dense in its coverage, and because Cézanne's influence permeated American art, we are immersed in a vast panorama, and the book is filled with great insight as to how American artists saw and came to know Cézanne. We still need a full exposition of exactly how individual artists were affected, and there is at least one book possible on Cézanne after 1921. But surely Rewald cannot be expected to have written every book that needs to be written.

Rewald begins at the beginning with the first Cézannes to come to this country, two

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paintings brought over in 1891 by Miss Sara Hallowell, a friend of Mary Cassatt's. The pictures did not remain here, however; they left without a trace, and were returned to France, where they were eventually sold. The main body of the book closes with the large exhibition of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in May 1921, which included twenty-four paintings by Cézanne. Rewald describes the show's genesis, its content, and its impact in detail, and points out its influence on the lives of many who there experienced modern art for the first time. Among them was a young Columbia student named Meyer Schapiro (b. 1904), who was able to see and study Cézanne's painting firsthand at this show. Schapiro's influence on succeeding generations is legendary. With this closing note, Rewald forcefully ties the period under review to our own time, underscoring the historical continuity of events that continue to shape our understanding of Cézanne and modern art. By forging Sara Hallowell and Meyer Schapiro together, Rewald vividly invokes his unshakable belief that there is no such thing as an isolated historical fact.

In between, in some three hundred fifty pages, Rewald gives us a wealth of information and observations that are likely to astonish even the best-informed reader. Given its dense fabric, the book must be applauded as a model of lucid organization. Myriad facts, the result of leaving no stone unturned, are balanced with broad historical characterizations, pointed judgments, and revealing speculations. This is old-fashioned art history at its best, point by point, date by date, fact by fact, painting by painting. It is a feat that only someone at the top of his game could perform, and it is one at which we can only marvel. The book is riveting and reads with the inner force of a novel, as Rewald takes us from the slow, painful beginnings of Cézanne's reputation in the 1890s to his emergence as a major force in America. Nothing is left to chance, and one is grateful for the respect shown to the reader. For example, Rewald includes a table showing the relative values of the dollar and the franc in 1899 and 1987, so we can make sense of the frequently quoted sales prices. The photo-numbers of all works are given in the margins, and, best of all, miracle of miracles, works are reproduced on or close to the page on which they are discussed. There are many rare photographs, often of major and minor figures in the story, installation views of exhibitions, pages from the ledgers of Vollard and Bernheim-Jeune, magazine articles, even a photograph of Cézanne's tomb at Aix. Rewald has culled these from archives all over the world.

In *Cézanne and America* we are given a mass of new information as well as a clarification of events and figures heretofore only imperfectly or incompletely known. Who knew for certain that *The Art Journal*, published in London, gave the first favorable comments in English on Cézanne (in 1895), and who was familiar with the March 1908 article on Cézanne in the *Burr-McIntosh Monthly*, written by a certain Ottilie de Kozmutza? This article had the distinction of referring to Cézanne as if he were still alive and also of reproducing a landscape by Albert Marquet as the work of Cézanne. Typically, Rewald quotes extensively from the first article and reproduces a page from the second so that we may read and experience for ourselves, in detail, the words of those who commented on Cézanne. At the same time he focuses on more familiar names and terrain with a detail and clarity long missing from our general knowledge of the field. We learn, for example, the exact date of the Havemeyers' first acquisition of a Cézanne, in 1898; and we learn that by 1907, when Henry Havemeyer died, they owned about twelve Cézannes, although the paintings had not been seen at all. The meeting between Max Weber and Henri Rousseau at the great Cézanne memorial show at the Salon d'Automne in October 1907, is a well-known event, but in the context of the relentless narrative of this book it takes on new meaning and poignancy. Rewald gives us Weber's account of it, including Rousseau's wonderful

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comment: "Ah, Weber, if I had this picture at home I could finish it." The Armory Show is looked at in a detailed and fresh light, and through Rewald's familiarity with dealers' journals and ledgers we now know far more about which Cézannes were actually included. Thus we know more precisely how artists here were likely to have been influenced.

Rewald's account is especially illuminating in the later part of the 1890s and the early years of this century, a period still insufficiently known in American art. He confirms that Bernard Berenson was the first American to mention Cézanne in print, in his *Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, published in 1897. Although he compared Cézanne to Michelangelo, Berenson did have some reservations about his handling of space. These remarks Rewald quotes, disapprovingly, at length; his discussion points out that Berenson's relation to modern art is more extensive and complex than is supposed, and makes us eager to know more about the subject. Rewald clarifies the role of Charles Loeser, who also settled in Florence and who was one of Berenson's initial Harvard sponsors. Rewald shows us that Loeser actually began to buy Cézannes as early as June 1896, making him one of the first Americans to collect Cézanne's works. Egisto Fabbri, a Florentine born in New York of an Italian father and American mother, was probably the first American to buy a Cézanne, having done so in January, 1896, only a few months after Vollard gave Cézanne his first one-man show. Hitherto, Loeser and Fabbri were for this reader only shadowy figures; now we know exactly who they were and exactly what their roles were.

Thus it is, piece by piece, bit by bit, that Rewald constructs and expands his account. Nothing gets by him. He credits James G. Huneker, the American writer who was in Paris in the 1890s, for his early interest in Cézanne but takes him severely to task for relying on inaccurate accounts of Cézanne found in the writings of George Moore and J. K. Huysmans. Rewald is a harsh and impatient judge, calling Huneker's reliance "deplorable—if not tragic." Nor does Rewald stop there. He nails Huneker by disproving his claim of having visited Cézanne in 1901 by establishing that the tram on which Huneker said he rode to Aix did not in fact open until 1903. No artist ever had a stauncher or more vigilant champion than Rewald, and woe unto those who do not get it right when it comes to Cézanne. The man cares, and factual accuracy matters to him deeply, in ways that we seldom see these days.

Even so, Rewald never gets lost in his unrelenting detective work, or in the stories of lesser figures. His description of the roles played by major figures in the Cézanne saga—such as Maurice Prendergast or Mary Cassatt—are full, sure, and to the point. As his account enters the twentieth century, it inexorably builds up steam, with a force and weight that propels us swiftly into every corner of American art, both here and abroad. Rewald is excellent on the Steins and their circle, and his account of Leo Stein is particularly good, portraying this brilliant, mercurial figure in sharp relief. His chapter on Albert C. Barnes, whom he terms the "not so noble buyer," is a hair-raising chronicle of this man's insensitivity and deceit. Here as elsewhere Rewald pulls no punches. Rewald does not hesitate to reassess the long venerated and overromanticized figures in American art. For example, he finally tells us the truth about Arthur Jerome Eddy and his 1914 book *Cubists and Post-Impressionism*—namely that it is not very good. Never again will we look at these people in quite the same way.

Nevertheless, Rewald gives full and generous praise when it is due. His lengthy discussion of Willard Huntington Wright finally accords to this extraordinary critic his rightful place in American art. Rewald understands that Wright's extravagant praise of the Synchronists has hurt his reputation, but convincingly demonstrates just why Wright's extensive and intelligent writings on the evolution of modernism and on Cézanne's role are landmarks in the

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literature on modern art. The portraits of Barnes, Stein, and Wright are the best we have on these complex, important figures, whose contributions have been inadequately understood to date.

Rewald's intensity, it should be noted, is leavened by a sharp sense of humor, particularly in his memorable characterizations of *retardataire* artists and writers. Of Royal Cortissoz he remarks that "similar opinions had been voiced by Kenneth Cox, who spoke with the authority of a veteran fighter against new ideas, a man who could truly be called a reactionary's reactionary"; he faults critics "who have nothing to say but say it anyway," like Camille Mauclair, who "remained glued to his incomprehension." Rewald has a fine sense of irony, too, pointing out that while Henry McBride in 1917 celebrated the demise of "poor Bouguereau" at the hands of Cézanne, the revisionists of today have brought Bouguereau back to haunt us. With a tinge of sadness we note once more that, for all the years of past struggle, each generation must fight again, against great odds, to understand where the best art is to be found.

Nothing is ever definitive and more information will continue to come to light on the subject of Cézanne and America. The recently unearthed Pach papers, now at the Archives of American Art, may add a new dimension, for example. Cézanne specialists will no doubt find points to quarrel over. At least one critic has already told us of the book Rewald *should* have written. Given the vastness, depth, and complexity of Cézanne and his art, this kind of carping is inevitable. But it is almost beside the point. *Cézanne and America* reminds us that there are higher standards for which we must reach. That Rewald never minces his words or opinions, that he is demanding in the extreme, on us as readers as well as on his subjects, is a tonic in a period of so-called pluralism, where one thing is usually considered to be as good as another. American art has long needed more of this kind of acuity and toughness of judgment. The book's largeness of scope and spirit, its fullness, its essential excellence—all of these issue a particularly welcome call to the world of American art, where the espousal of art has frequently been limited in its reach and provincial in its outlook. Rewald's great accomplishment may finally be that his book forces us to view America and American art on a higher level and in an international context. It forces us to see modernism as a multinational, complex phenomenon in which Americans played an early and important part. If we segregate American art, we view it by another standard, one that exaggerates the importance of the second-rate while diminishing the real achievement of our best artists. Rewald makes us understand that we need neither apologize for nor exaggerate the accomplishments of American modernism. Finally, it allows us to see that Rewald's achievement, no less than his subject's, places him in the "most exalted ranks" of which Henry McBride spoke long ago.

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Letters

The figurative Fifties

To the Editors:
Regarding Dan Hofstadter's article, "The Figurative Fifties," in your May 1989 issue:

The father of the artist Jan Müller was not a Communist. In Germany, he was a socialist.

The father did not arrive in the United States in the Thirties. He arrived in 1941.

Jan Müller and one of his sisters arrived in the United States approximately six months later. He was nineteen years old.

Jan Müller was one month into his thirty-fifth year when he died. He did not die of rheumatic fever. He died in January, 1958, due to a malfunction of a plastic valve in his heart.

The artist Bob Thompson never met Jan Müller. Bob Thompson arrived "on the scene" in Provincetown six months after Jan Müller's death. He became very familiar with Jan Müller's work via his widow.

Bob Thompson died of drug-related causes.

As your magazine may possibly be used as a reference for young future art historians, it would be appreciated if these oblique remarks were made more accurate.

Dody Müller
New York, NY

Dan Hofstadter replies:
Dody Müller was the wife of the painter Jan Müller and wrote an authoritative account of his life for the catalogue of his 1962 retrospective at the Guggenheim museum. The errors she has discovered in my review of the "Figurative Fifties" exhibition were the result of a garbled transmission of facts and have no polemical import; certainly none of the circumstances of either Müller's or Thompson's life had any bearing on my response to their paintings.

F. O. Matthiessen

To the Editors:
In his article on F. O. Matthiessen (June 1989), James W. Tuttleton gives a highly skewed account of Matthiessen's attitude toward being a homosexual. Although Matthiessen might not have entirely accepted his sexuality by the standards of the Eighties, he was extremely advanced by the standards of the mid-Twenties, when he met Russell Cheney, his lover for twenty-five years. No evidence supports Tuttleton's contention that Matthiessen's suicide was caused by "self-loathing, confusingly and inextricably connected with his homosexuality."

Tuttleton's choice of evidence is one-sided and misleading. He contends from Lewis Hyde's *Rat and the Devil* (1978), a selection of the Matthiessen-Cheney correspondence, that Matthiessen's relationship with Cheney was "not without problems" (what lifelong relationship ever is?) caused by "Matthiessen's negative view of himself as a homosexual." The letters prove quite the opposite. It was Cheney who felt guilty about being gay and asked Matthiessen to stop having sex with him. Matthiessen's response is a loving refusal:

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> [W]e were born as we are. I am no longer the least ashamed of it [being homosexual]. What is there to be ashamed of? It simply reveals the fact that sex is not mathematical and clear cut, something definitely to be separated into male and female . . . . Ashamed of it? Forty years ago, perhaps, when nothing was really known about it, I would have felt myself an outcast. But now that the matter has been studied scientifically, and the facts are there in black and white? No, accept it, just the way that you accept the fact that you have two legs.

Such passages—and the above is one of many—do not sound like the work of a man with "a negative view of himself as a homosexual."

Tuttleton relies on hearsay to support his position, citing only one instance from Matthiessen's own pen, his observation that in Whitman's "passivity . . . there is a quality vaguely pathological and homosexual." Tuttleton lifted this quotation from William E. Cain's *F. O. Matthiessen and the Politics of Criticism,* the book that occasioned his essay. Cain used it to prove the same point, but he failed to check the context in *American Renaissance.* The passage appears in a long, closely argued paragraph in which Matthiessen acknowledges that those "readers with a distaste for loosely defined mysticism" would find something "vaguely pathological and homosexual" in Whitman's passivity. But then Matthiessen distinguishes himself from such readers:

> Nevertheless, this fluidity of sexual sympathy made possible Whitman's receptivity to life. The ability to live spontaneously on primitive levels . . . yielded a broader experience than of any of his contemporaries. And he did not simply exhibit pathological symptoms; he created poetry.

Instead of distancing himself from Whitman, Matthiessen actually was drawing himself closer to Whitman's "fluidity of sexual sympathy."

Tuttleton explains Matthiessen's suicide as an expression of his homosexual self-loathing. We will never know what drove Matthiessen to that desperate act, but clearly there were many factors. He came from an unhappy broken home. His mother died when Matthiessen was in his early twenties, and he seems to have put off grieving for her when he met Cheney. Consequently, when Cheney died, Matthiessen had two deaths to mourn. Moreover, Matthiessen *was* a depressive, and his political dreams were crushed.

But Tuttleton is correct in assuming some connection between Matthiessen's homosexuality and his suicide, although the connection is far different from what he supposes. A month before Matthiessen's suicide, Republicans had begun to exploit the issue of homosexuals working in the State Department for political interests. The threat of a dual attack on Matthiessen as both a socialist and a homosexual seems, along with everything else, to have pushed him literally over the edge.

Some people assume that all homosexuals must hate being gay and therefore ascribe all their problems to self-loathing. Matthiessen knew that his sexuality was hated by the general population, but he himself understood and appreciated the perspective that being different gave him. Tuttleton's misrepresentations deny Matthiessen that insight into himself.

David Bergman
Baltimore, MD

James W. Tuttleton replies:

I am not one those who "assume that all homosexuals must hate being gay and therefore ascribe their problems to self-loathing." However, I don't think that the suicide of F. O. Matthiessen can be attributed to any cause *except* self-loathing, a condition all the more poignant for being unresponsive to psychotherapy. Readers will remember that I dealt with various possible "explanations" of his suicide, but Mr. Bergman has objected only to my remarks on its possible relation to Matthiessen's homosexuality.

It is quite true that public officials were concerned in the late 1940s with homosexuals in sensitive government posts: they were possible security risks vulnerable to Soviet blackmail and recruitment into espionage. But Matthiessen was never regarded by any responsible person, to my knowledge, as vulnerable to this fate. So the situation in the State Department or the status of employees in other government agencies seems to have a remote relation to his death.

In trying to account for the ambiguous causes of his suicide—difficult in any case, but especially

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so decades after the fact and for one who, like me, did not know Matthiessen personally—I was of course dependent in some measure on hearsay: what those who knew him, like Joseph and U.T.M. Summers, said about his negative attitude toward homosexuality at Harvard. I have no reason to believe their testimony to be untrustworthy. But in fact we have Matthiessen's own words. In the passage cited by Mr. Bergman from *American Renaissance*, the close reader will note that Matthiessen observes of Whitman that "he did not simply exhibit pathological symptoms; he created poetry." This is a way of saying that Whitman *did* exhibit pathological symptoms associated with homosexuality, but that he also created poetry. In the Notebooks, Whitman admonished himself to repress his homosexual impulses, those "adhesive perturbations"; at times he denied being a homosexual, and—to prove his heterosexuality—he once even falsely claimed to have fathered several illegitimate children in Louisiana. Matthiessen was fully aware of Whitman's inner conflict over his homoerotic inclinations and is manifestly sympathetic—as how could he not be?—with the poet's difficulty.

That Matthiessen denied anything shameful about homosexual acts doesn't convince me that he, an aspiring Christian, accepted himself in this respect; in fact, his dismissal of the shamefulness of it—as cited by Mr. Bergman—really says much more than Mr. Bergman intends it to. Isn't this denial of shame really to be understood in the light of an un-Christian sexual desire—to seduce Cheney back into sexual congress? What is more common to the perennial psychopathology of individuals than the denial to another of felt wrongdoing, especially in the service of getting the other into bed? How else do people dispose of their guilt? We have an instance here, I am afraid, of bad faith. In any case, I can't see Matthiessen as having fully "appreciated the perspective that being different gave him." More was (and is) psychologically and morally involved in homosexuality than the neutral word "different" may suggest. Despite "the standards of the Eighties," many still struggle with such feelings while denying that there is anything wrong about them.

Edith Wharton

To the Editors:
Thank you for sending me your June issue, with my letter of response to James W. Tuttleton's article on Edith Wharton.

Unfortunately, there is a misprint in the second column on page 6. The printed text reads "at Richard Howard's insistence." The MS I sent read "at Richard Howard's instance."

The phrasing as it now stands seriously misrepresents Mr. Howard's intervention and may well embarrass him.

Marion Mainwaring
Boston, MA

Speaking for the humanities

To the Editors:
I enjoyed D. G. Myers's lucid analysis of the American Council of Learned Societies' pamphlet, "Speaking for the Humanities." I would just like to emphasize one point especially that Mr. Myers had a chance only to imply.

The writers of the pamphlet claim that new modes of analysis are introducing the viewpoints of "marginal" groups other than "white males" into the academy. Even apart from the dubious assumptions behind it, this claim needs qualification. Feminist criticism, for example, is not genuinely concerned with literature by and about women, but only with a feminist ideological interpretation of such literature. This interpretation has as much to do with the full range of women's experience as hurricanes and tornadoes with the full range of weather possibilities. So it goes for most of what passes for feminist "scholarship" today. So much for the "female viewpoint" in the academy. I have more than a suspicion that the case is similar with all the other "marginalized" and "oppressed" groups for whom these scholars claim to be speaking.

Carol Iannone
New York, NY

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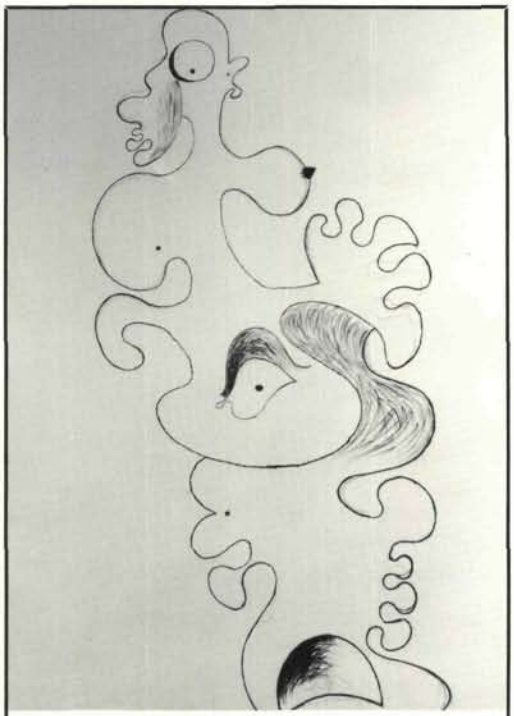

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